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THE FEAR OF THE DEAD
IN PRIMITIVE RELIGION

VOL. II



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THE
FEAR OF THE DEAD
IN PRIMITIVE RELIGION

LECTURES DELIVERED ON
THE WILLIAM WYSE FOUNDATION
AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

BY

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER

O.M., F.R.S., F.B.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE *INSTITUT DE FRANCE*

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PREFACE

IN this second course of lectures on the "Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion" I resume the subject at the point at which I left off at the end of the first course. I said there that primitive man attempts to get rid of the dangerous spirits of the dead by one or other of two methods, either the method of persuasion and conciliation or the method of force and fraud. In the first course I illustrated the former method, that of persuasion and conciliation, by a variety of examples. I now take up the second method, that of force and fraud, or deception. For primitive man imagines that the spirits of the dead are not only amenable to physical force, but that they can be deceived or cheated into doing his will. In the present course I have dealt mainly with the method of force, showing how primitive man attempts to drive away the spirits of the dead by sheer physical force, and to keep them at a distance by interposing physical obstacles between him and them. The method of fraud or deception practised on the spirits of the dead has been incidentally illustrated ; but this curious aspect of primitive religion must be reserved for fuller

treatment in a subsequent work, in which I shall hope to discuss many other important sides of the subject, which the limitations of time have compelled me to pass over at present. Meanwhile this volume concludes the second course of my lectures on the William Wyse Foundation at Trinity College.

J. G. FRAZER

April 1934

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LECTURE I



LECTURE I

IN my former lectures on the fear of the dead in primitive religion, I reached or anticipated certain general conclusions which it may be well to recapitulate before I proceed to develop the subject in further detail. We saw that the belief in immortality, or to speak more correctly, the belief in the survival of human personality for an indefinite time after death, has been widespread if not universal among mankind, being shared by the races of lower culture, whom we call savages or barbarians, as well as by the civilized nations who now cherish the belief as a fundamental article of their religious creed. But among the races of lower culture, who may be called primitive in a relative sense by comparison with the civilized nations, the spirits of the dead appear to be predominantly feared rather than loved, for they are believed to be the sources of many evils which afflict humanity, including the last evils, sickness and death. Hence, primitive man is often at great pains to send these dangerous spirits away and to keep them at a safe distance from him. At the same time, I pointed out in my lectures, and I desire now to repeat, that this fear of the dead appears to be by

no means characteristic in the same degree of all the races of men, even those of lower culture, for many of them observe customs which appear to be inconsistent with such a fear, and to indicate rather respect and affection for the souls of the departed. Thus, for example, many peoples have been accustomed to welcome home the spirits of the dead and entertain them at a great festival once a year, of which the rites of All Souls' Day in Europe have furnished a conspicuous instance down to modern times.¹ Again, many peoples have been in the habit of burying their dead in their houses; a practice which is hardly consistent with a deep-seated fear of the dead and a dread of close contact with them. Other peoples, again, though they do not bury the dead in the house, attempt to bring back their spirits to the house and to install them there, which incontestably proves that they expect to reap some benefit from the presence of the spirits in the dwelling. For it is commonly supposed that the spirits of the dead can confer many benefits on the living, if only they are duly propitiated, and kept in good humour, though they are quick to resent any fancied slight or neglect on the part of the survivors. Among the benefits so anticipated appears to be the hope that the spirits will ultimately be re-born in the infants of the family. Once more, the practice of embalming the bodies of the dead, as has been well pointed out by Mr. Warren Dawson,²

¹ I have collected many examples of such festivals in *The Golden Bough*, pp. 51 *sqq.*

² Warren R. Dawson in *Folk-Lore*, xlv. (December 1933) p. 416.

undoubtedly aims at preserving the bodies of the dead, and presumably, therefore, their spirits, for an indefinite time after death, which would certainly not be done if the living did not expect to receive some benefit from the continued existence of the dead. The classic land of embalming was ancient Egypt, and in its extant literature, as I am informed by our eminent English Egyptologist, Mr. Alan H. Gardiner, there is very little trace of a fear of the dead. To sum up : the attitude of primitive man to the spirits of the dead is complex ; it is a compound of hope and fear, of affection and aversion, of attraction and repulsion, and in any attempt to analyse it, full account should be taken of all these conflicting emotions and tendencies. But in investigating our complex subject it is legitimate, I trust, to single out some one particular element of the compound for special examination. That must be my justification for here concentrating attention on the element of fear in the attitude of primitive man towards the spirits of the dead.

In my last lecture, I dealt with the means which primitive man adopts for banishing the dangerous spirits of the dead and keeping them at a distance. I said that these means fall into two classes, which may be distinguished respectively as fair or foul, according as they are based on either persuasion and conciliation, or on force and fraud. When the method of persuasion and conciliation is adopted, the ghost is invited or entreated to go quietly away to the spirit-land and to stay there, not returning

to torment the living with his unwelcome attentions. He is provided with directions for the journey to the spirit-land and with a guide to conduct him thither : he receives food to eat and money to defray his expenses on the road ; and he is furnished with a bridge or a boat to enable him to cross any rivers or seas which he may encounter on his passage to the far country. But in the opinion of many primitive peoples, there are obdurate and obstreperous spirits who, turning a deaf ear to blandishments and a blind eye to the accommodations obligingly offered them for the journey, obstinately persist in haunting their old home, and persecuting their surviving kinsfolk in a great variety of ways. In the case of such incorrigible spirits nothing remains but to drive them away by sheer force, and to force in such circumstances primitive man does not hesitate to have recourse. This introduces us to the foul treatment of the spirits of the dead to which we must now turn our attention.

Thus, for example, at a burial in Melville Island, North Australia, all the men present have been seen to charge at the invisible spirit of the dead man, throwing sticks and spears at it in order to drive it into the grave.¹ The Arunta of Central Australia believe that after his death a man's ghost is free to walk the earth for a period of twelve or eighteen months, but that after that time it is necessary to confine his restless spirit within narrower bounds.

¹ Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), p. 233.

The favourite haunt of the ghost is believed to be the burnt and deserted camp where he died. Here accordingly, on a certain day, a band of men and women, the men armed with shields and spear-throwers, assemble and begin dancing round the charred and blackened remains of the camp, shouting and beating the air with their weapons and hands in order to drive away the lingering spirit from the spot he loves too well. When the dance is over the whole party proceeds at a run to the grave, chasing the ghost before them. In vain the poor ghost makes a last bid for freedom and doubles back towards the camp; the leader of the party, making a long circuit, cuts off the retreat of the fugitive. Finally, having run the ghost to earth they trample him down into the grave, dancing and stamping on the heaped-up soil, while with downward thrusts through the air they beat and force him underground.¹ After a series of deaths a band of the Kamilaroi tribe in New South Wales used to scour the country, dancing and beating the air with branches to drive away the dangerous spirits of the dead, while a chorus of women and girls helped them by their songs.² The natives of the Banks' Islands believe that after a death the spirit of the deceased does not at once depart, but continues to haunt the neighbourhood for five or ten days; but as they

¹ Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 498-508.

² Rev. Wm. Ridley, *Kamilaroi*,

and other Australian Languages (Sydney, 1875), p. 149; *id.* "Report on the Australian Language and Traditions", *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, ii. (1873) p. 269.

think it undesirable that the ghost should linger for more than five days they drive it away with shouts and blowing of conches, and sometimes with the booming sound of bull-roarers.¹ At Ureparapara in these islands, the ceremony of ghost-driving is peculiar and remarkable. "Bags of small stones and short pieces of bamboo are provided for the people of the village, and are charmed by those who have the knowledge of the magic chaunt appropriate for the purpose. Two men, each with two white stones in his hands, sit in the dead man's house, one on either side. These men begin to clink the stones one against the other, the women begin to wail, the neighbours—who have all assembled at one end of the village—begin to march through it in a body to the other end, throwing the stones into the houses and all about, and beating the bamboos together. So they pass through till they come to the bush beyond, when they throw down the bamboos and bags. They have now driven out the ghost, who up to this time has been about the house, in which the widow has for these five days never left the dead man's bed except upon necessity; and even then she leaves a coconut to represent her till she returns. At Motlav the ghost is not driven away unless the man who has died was badly afflicted with ulcers and sores, either a *gov* covered with sores, or a *mamnagita* with a single large ulcer or more. When such a one is dying the people of his village send word in time to the next village westwards, as the

¹ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians* (Oxford, 1891), p. 267.

ghost will go out following the sun, to warn them to be prepared. When the *gov* is dead they bury him, and then, with shell-trumpets blowing and the stalks of coconut fronds stripped of some of the leaflets beating the ground, they chase the ghost to the next village. The people of that village take up the chase, and hunt the ghost further westward ; and so on till the sea is reached. Then the frond stalks are thrown away and the people return, sure that the ghost has left the island, and will not strike another man with the disease.”¹

In San Cristoval, one of the Solomon Islands, when a burial is taking place, a man goes to the hut of the deceased, and, standing at the door, fishes for the soul of the dead man with a fishing-rod baited with betel nut ; and when he has caught it, puts the ghost with the bait into a little bag. Later on the bag will be put with the skull of the dead man wherever it is kept. After the soul of the deceased has thus been caught and deposited in the bag, other men come to the door of the hut and fish for the ghosts who may have come to the hut to prey on the flesh of the corpse. The bait in this case is a dracaena leaf. The other men come, some with torches, some with sticks, and entering the hut dash their torches and sticks against the walls to drive out the lingering and dangerous ghosts.² In this custom it will be observed that though the ghost of the dead man is carefully removed from the hut

¹ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, pp. 270-271.

² C. E. Fox, *The Threshold of the Pacific* (London, 1924), p. 212.

which he inhabited, it is not driven away to a distance, but is deposited with the skull wherever that may be kept, obviously in order that the spirit of the deceased may abide with his mortal remains. So far, therefore, the custom does not conform to the general type of driving away ghosts to the bourne from which no traveller returns.

Among the Sulka of New Britain, after a death has taken place, a deep hole is dug in the hut of the deceased and the corpse is placed over it, and kept there for some time. Then follows the ceremony of driving out the ghost from the hut. The time for performing the ceremony is communicated secretly to the men who are appointed to carry it out, lest the ghost should overhear and prepare to resist. The time is always in the early morning when the first cry of a certain bird is heard. At that moment the natives raise a great shout, and the ghost-drivers, entering the hut, beat and shake the walls, and set fire to coconut leaves with which they dance wildly about, thus expelling the ghost of the deceased. When they have done their work, they throw away the burning leaves on the path. Thereby the ghost is believed to be frightened and to be driven finally away.¹

In Fiji the old custom of driving away the spirit of the dead has been described as follows by Captain Erskine, who witnessed it about the middle of the nineteenth century. "As soon as this feast was

¹ M. S. C. Rascher, "Die Sulka, *logie*, xxxiv. (1904) p. 214; R. ein Beitrag zur Ethnographie Neu-Pommern", *Archiv für Anthropologie*, xxxiv. (1904) p. 214; R. Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (Stuttgart, 1907), p. 185.

over (it was then dark) began the dance and uproar which are always carried on either at natural or violent deaths. All classes then give themselves up to excess, especially at unnatural deaths of this sort, and create all manner of uproar by means of large bamboos, trumpet-shells, etc., which will contribute to the general noise which is considered requisite to drive away the spirit and to deter him from desiring to dwell or even to hover about his late residence. The uproar is always held in the late habitation of the deceased, the reason being that as no one knows for a certainty what reception he will receive in the invisible world, if it is not according to his expectations, he will most likely repent of his bargain and wish to come back. For that reason they make a great noise to frighten him away, and dismantle his former habitation of everything that is attractive, and clothe it with everything that to their ideas seems repulsive.”¹

In the Marquesas Islands of the Pacific, after a death, the ghost was believed not to abandon the corpse definitely for the first two nights. On the third night, a priest, stepping out on the terrace in front of the house, implored the wandering soul of the deceased to depart; and by way of enforcing the request, a band of men, armed with spears and other lethal weapons, went about in the outer darkness, beating the bushes and stabbing the thatched roofs of the houses in order to drive the lingering

¹ J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific* (London, 1853), pp. 475-477.

ghost away. If, roused by the clamour, the dogs began to bark, the priest would say, "The soul is departing".¹

In the Gilbert Islands of the Pacific "on the three nights following a death the ceremony of *bo-maki* was performed. All the people irrespective of their kinship to the deceased, gathered together in the darkness, with sticks of pandanus wood and the butt ends of coconut leaves in their hands, at the southern extremity of the village, and forming a line abreast from east to west, slowly advanced northwards, beating the ground and trees before them with their staves. Not a word was uttered. When the line had swept through the settlement from south to north it stopped, and the participants disbanded in silence. All pedestrians who happened upon the party while it was at work would seize a staff without a word, join in and when it was finished pass on their way. The object of the ceremony was to encourage the soul to leave the neighbourhood of the body and also to drive away any evil spirits that might wish to possess it. Immediately life was extinct the family began a great wailing and yelling which was kept up by relays for three days without intermission, except when the ceremony of *bo-maki* was being performed; to have sustained it during that rite would have been to encourage the soul of the dead to linger about the body and haunt the living."² In these same islands it was customary at

¹ M. Radiguet, *Les Derniers Sauvages* (Paris, 1882), pp. 284 sqq.

² Arthur Grimble, "From Birth

to Death in the Gilbert Islands", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, ii. (1921) p. 44.

a burial to place two coconuts in the hands of the corpse, as an additional precaution to prevent the ghost from returning to haunt his kinsfolk. "The body was kept for three or nine days, being buried on the fourth or tenth, as the case might be. Those who kept it for the shorter period were of the opinion that, as the soul had finally been driven away from its neighbourhood on the third repetition of the *bo-maki* ceremony, it might safely be laid to rest on the fourth day. But many families, and particularly those of Tarawa and Butaritari, believed that the soul might reinhabit the body at any time during the nine days after death, and so, though they took the greatest pains to prevent it, still kept its fleshly tenement available until the last moment."¹

The Kiwai of British New Guinea believe that the spirits of the dead normally depart to Adiri, the far-off spirit-land, in the west; but some of them are thought to linger behind, and to haunt the villages intent on mischief. So it becomes necessary to drive away these malignant spirits with blasts of the conch shell.²

The Kiwai are also accustomed to burn the platform on which a corpse has been exposed and gifts which have been deposited on the grave. Moreover, they chew ginger in order to drive away the lingering spirit of the dead.³

In the Purari delta of British New Guinea, at a death some of the natives wave branches of the

¹ A. Grimble, *op. cit.* p. 45.

² W. N. Beaver, *Unexplored New Guinea* (London, 1920), p. 177.

³ G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea* (London, 1927), p. 259.

coconut palm over the corpse in the house to waft the spirit of the deceased to spirit-land, before they carry out the corpse to burial.¹

The natives about Hood Bay and Port Moresby in British New Guinea "believe, too, in the deathlessness of the soul, but their ideas as to its abode or condition are very vague and indefinite. A death in the village is the occasion of bringing plenty of ghosts to escort their new companion and perhaps fetch some one else. All night the friends of the deceased sit up and keep the drums going to drive away the spirits. When I was sleeping one night at Hood Bay a party of young men and boys came round with sticks, striking the fences and posts of houses all through the village. This I found was always done when any one died, to drive back the spirits to their own quarters on the adjacent mountain tops."²

Among the Roro-speaking peoples of British New Guinea when a corpse has been laid in the grave a near relative takes a branch of a tree and strokes the body from foot to head, in order to drive away the spirit. In Yule Island similarly two men stroke the corpse from head to foot with a certain herb to drive away the spirit. After the spirit has been thus swept from the corpse the same two men, shouting and brandishing sticks and torches, chase the spirit beyond the bounds of the village into the bush,

¹ J. H. Holmes, *In Primitive New Guinea* (London, 1924), pp. 218, 219.

² The Rev. W. G. Lawes, "Notes

on New Guinea and its Inhabitants", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, ii. (1880) p. 615.

where, with a last curse, they hurl at it the sticks or torches they have in their hands.¹

After a death or a series of deaths, the Orokaiva of British New Guinea celebrate a drama, a dance and a feast in honour of the recently deceased. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the paraphernalia of the dancers are placed on a raft, and the spirit or the spirits of the dead are supposed to embark along with them and to float down the river to its mouth: meanwhile, the chief man of the village calls out the names of all the deceased and bids them go right down to the sea and there to turn into crocodiles, sharks and snakes.²

Among the Papuans of Geelvink Bay in Dutch New Guinea after the burial, you may hear about sunset a great uproar in all the houses of the village: the people are yelling and throwing sticks about with the object of driving away the dreaded ghost. They have given him all that he can expect to get: to wit, a grave, a banquet and funeral ornaments; and now they beseech him not to intrude upon the survivors, and not to kill them or fetch them away, as the Papuans put it.³

In some of the Turki tribes of Siberia it is believed that after a death the soul of the deceased is free to roam about for forty days, after which, if

¹ C. G. Seligman, *The Melaneseans of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 275.

² F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society* (Oxford, 1930), pp. 253 *sqq.*, pp. 279 *sq.*

³ J. L. van Hasselt, "Die Papua-stämme an der Geelvinkbai (Neu-Guinea)", *Mitteilungen der Geographische Gesellschaft zu Jena*, ix. (1891) p. 101; cf. J. B. van Hasselt, "Die Noeforezen", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, viii. (1876) p. 196.

it is still hanging about, the *shaman* drives it out and drums it down to hell. To secure a favourable reception for the dead man in his new abode, the *shaman* is said, after conducting the soul personally thither, to serve out brandy to the devils all round.¹

Among the Western Bhotias of Thibet there is performed on the last day of the obsequies a final ceremony for getting rid of the soul of the deceased. A venerable sage gives his last instructions to the departing spirit. The clothes of the deceased are taken and placed upon an animal which represents the dead man. A man then leads forth the animal to a spot far from the village, while all the villagers beat the poor creature to drive it away and prevent its return. In Chaudans the animal is allowed to go free, but elsewhere low-caste Bhotias, or Thibetans, speedily dispatch it and eat its flesh. So glad are the villagers that the spirit has departed, that they return singing and dancing, and after this, the men and women shave, cut their hair, wash their heads and wear rings on their ears and hands.²

Among the Kunbis, a great agricultural caste of the Central Provinces of India, after all the other funeral rites have been performed, the chief mourner goes to the door of the house and, breaking an areca-nut on the threshold and placing it in his mouth, spits it out of the door, signifying the final ejection of the spirit of the deceased from the

¹ W. Radloff, *Aus Siberien* (Leipzig, 1884), ii. p. 52.

Tibet and the British Borderland (London, 1906), pp. 129, 130.

² Charles A. Sherring, *Western*

dwelling.¹ Among the Savara, a hill tribe of Southern India, as soon as a death has taken place in a house, a gun is fired at the door in order to drive away the spirit of the deceased.²

Among the Kachins of Burma, after a death in a house a priest attempts to lure the soul of the deceased out of the dwelling by means of a bait attached to the end of a string, of which he, sitting in the house, holds one end, while a man seated at the door holds the other and baited end of the string. If the soul is judged not to take the bait, as a further inducement to the soul to depart, the priest throws a spear at it, and tells it that the house is full of caterpillars, serpents and wild boars, which will bite the poor soul if it does not at once make off. When the priest feels sure that the ghost has really departed from the house, he takes his spear in his hand, and harangues the spirit as follows : " We have made solemn funeral rites for you ; we have offered you fowls and pigs and buffaloes, and we give you now these two images of birds to sell on the road ; take all these objects, these provisions for the journey and especially all evil omens, and go to your great-grandfather, by way of your tomb and those of your father and grandfather ".³

It is believed by the Malagasy that the spirits of

¹ R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. p. 36.

² E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), vi. p. 324 ; Fred. Fawcett, " On the Soaras (or Savaras), an aboriginal Hill People of the Eastern Ghats

of the Madras Presidency ", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. (1886) p. 248.

³ P. Ch. Gilhodes, " Mort et funérailles chez les Katchins (Birmanie) ", *Anthropos*, xiii. (1917-1918) pp. 264, 265

the dead hover about the towns and even revisit their former homes, "and it is customary in great floods or downpours of rain for the people to beat the sides of their houses with great violence to drive away, as they say, the *angatra* or spirits who may be seeking to re-enter and shelter themselves beneath the ancestral roof".¹

After a death the Bari of the Nilotic Sudan carry burning grass round the house to drive away the soul of the deceased, which otherwise would worry the survivors.² Among the Bakarewe, who inhabit an island of the Victoria Nyanza, on the fifth day after a burial, a relative of the deceased enters the house and turns everything upside down in the chamber where the dead man breathed his last. This he does in order to expel the ghost lest he should return to haunt and molest the survivors. The service which the kinsman thus renders to the family is a dangerous one, and no sooner has he performed it than he demands his reward, which is at once given him in the shape of a hoe, or a goat. Having got it, the ghost-driver departs quickly to his own house.³

Speaking of the natives of the Gabun district of West Africa, a very experienced American missionary tells us that "the feelings in the hearts of the mourners are very mixed. The outcry of affection, pleading with the dead to return to life, is sincere, the

¹ Henry W. Little, *Madagascar Nilotic Sudan* (London, 1932), p. 291. (Edinburgh and London, 1854), p. 84.

² C. G. Seligman and Brenda Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the* ³ P. Eugène Hurel, "Religion et vie domestique des Bakarewe", *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) p. 299.

survivor desiring the return to life to be complete ; but almost simultaneously with that cry comes a fear that the dead may indeed return, not as the accustomed embodied spirit, helpful and companionable, but as a disembodied spirit, invisible, estranged, perhaps inimical, and surrounded by an atmosphere of dread imparted by the unknown and unseen. The many then ask, not that the departed may return, but that, if it be hovering near, it will go away entirely. Few were those who during the life of the departed had not on occasion had some quarrel with him, or had done him some injustice or other wrong, and their thought is, ' His spirit will come back to avenge itself ! ' So guns are fired to frighten away the spirit and to cause it to go far off to the far world of spirits, and not take up residence in or near the town to haunt and injure the living."¹

Among the Ewe-speaking people of Togoland in West Africa, when the relatives of a dead man visit his fields for the first time after his death, they are careful to drive away his spirit by shouts and gun shots.²

In Loango, when many spirits of the dead are believed to be haunting and troubling a village, the inhabitants resort to strong measures for expelling them. Fires are kindled everywhere ; houses are swept and cleaned out ; the people rush about shouting and screaming, and men fire guns and brandish chopping knives to drive away the spirits.³

¹ R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), pp. 223-224.

(Berlin, 1906), p. 121.

² J. Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme*

³ E. Pechuel Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2 (Stuttgart, 1907), p. 309.

In aboriginal America, also, the custom of expelling the spirit of the deceased has often been observed and recorded. Thus, for example, among the Eskimo of Bering Strait, the ceremony has been described by an eye-witness as follows. On the evening of the second day after the death, the men in every house in the village took their domestic buckets and, turning them bottom upwards, went about thrusting the bottom of the vessel into every corner and into the smoke-hole and the doorway. This, it was said, was done to drive out the shade or ghost if it should be in the house, and from this custom the second day is called *a-hun-ig-ut*, or "the bottom day". After this was done, and the people were ready to retire for the night, every man took a long grass stem and, bending it, stuck both ends into the ground in a conspicuous place in the middle of the doorway. They said that this would frighten the spirit off, for should it come about and try to enter the house, it would see this bent grass, and believing it to be a snare, would go away, fearing to be caught. On the lower Yukon, below Ikogmut, "the housemates of the deceased must remain in their accustomed places in the house during the four days following the death, while the shade is believed to be still about. During this time all of them must keep fur hoods drawn over their heads to prevent the influence of the shade from entering their heads and killing them. At once, after the body is taken from the house, his sleeping-place must be swept clean and piled full of bags and other things, so as

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not to leave any room for the shade to return and reoccupy it. At the same time, the two persons who slept with him upon each side must not, upon any account, leave their places. If they were to do so the shade might return and, by occupying the vacant place, bring sickness or death to its original owner, or to the inmates of the house. For this reason none of the dead person's housemates are permitted to go outside during the four days following the death. The deceased person's nearest relatives cut their hair short along the forehead in sign of mourning. During the four days that the shade is thought to remain with the body, none of the relatives are permitted to use any sharp-edged or pointed instrument for fear of injuring the shade and causing it to be angry and to bring misfortune upon them. One old man said that should the relatives cut anything with a sharp instrument during this time, it would be as though he cut his own shade and would die."¹

Among the Shuswap of British Columbia, often after a death the *shaman* is called in by the relatives of the deceased. It is believed that the ghost of the dead person is eager to take one of his nearest relatives with him to the spirit-land. The *shaman* is called in to drive away the ghost. He sees the ghost and orders all the members of the mourning family to stay in the house, which the ghost cannot enter. Then he addresses the ghost, telling him that he

¹ E. W. Nelson, "The Eskimo of Bering Strait", *18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (1899), pp. 314, 315.

cannot have the person he wants. Thus he induces the ghost to go away and not to trouble the family any more.¹ Some of the Canadian Indians, whom the Jesuits called the Mountaineers, believed that when a man died in a hut his soul passed out of it by the smoke-hole in the roof, and they beat the walls of the hut with sticks to hasten its departure.² Among the Ojebway Indians, on the evening after a burial when it began to grow dark, the men used to fire their guns through the smoke-hole in the roof, while the women beat the walls of the hut with sticks in order to drive away the lingering ghost. As a further precaution against the return of the ghost, they cut thin strips of birch bark and hung them inside the walls of the hut, as scarecrows to frighten away the poor soul if nevertheless it should come back to disturb their slumbers.³

Among the Cora Indians of Mexico after a death wizards were engaged to hunt out and drive away the soul of the deceased. This they did by smoking their pipes and poking branches into all the corners of the house, until they pretended to find the lurking ghost, whom thereupon they summarily ejected.⁴

Thus we have seen that, in many parts of the world, primitive man has been in the habit of driving

¹ *Sixth Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada (Report of the British Association for 1890, separate reprint)*; Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia, by Dr. Fr. Boas, p. 85.

² *Relations des Jésuites* (Canadian reprint) (Quebec, 1858), i. Année 1634, p. 23; cf. *id.*, 1633, p. 11;

id., 1639, p. 44.

³ Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians* (London, 1861), pp. 99-100.

⁴ H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America* (London, 1875-1876), i. p. 744.

forcibly away the dangerous ghosts of the dead. In civilized Europe similar usages have not been unknown. Thus, the Germans sometimes wave towels about or sweep the ghost out with a besom,¹ just as in old Rome the heir solemnly swept out the ghost of his predecessor with a broom specially made for the purpose.² So like is human nature in all latitudes and under all varieties of culture.

¹ A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*, Second Edition (Berlin, 1869), §§ 725, 737; F. Schmidt, *Sitten und Gebräuche bei Hochzeit, Taufen und Begräbnissen in Thüringen*, p. 85; J. A. E. Kohler, *Volksbrauch, Aberglauben, Sagen und andre alte Überlieferungen im Voigtlande* (Leipsic, 1867), p. 254.

² Festus, *s.v. everriator*, p. 68, ed. W. M. Lindsay: "Everriator vocatur, qui iure accepta hereditate

iusta facere defuncto debet; qui si non fecerit, seu quid in ea re turbaverit, suo capite luat. Id nomen ductum a verrendo. Nam exverriæ purgatio quaedam domus, ex qua mortuus ad sepulturam ferendus est, quæ fit per everriatorem certo genere scoparum adhibito, ab extra verrendo dictarum." In this passage the ghost is not expressly mentioned, but on the analogy of the customs described above he may be inferred with a high degree of probability.

LECTURE II



LECTURE II

IN the last lecture we saw that in many parts of the world, after deaths have taken place, primitive man has been in the habit of driving away the spirits of the departed because he believes that the continued presence of these spirits in their old haunts might bring many calamities on the living. But once he succeeded to his satisfaction in banishing these dangerous spirits to a distance, his anxiety is by no means over ; for he thinks that the spirits can return and persecute the survivors ; especially by carrying off their souls with them to dead land. Hence, having banished the spirits of the dead to what he conceives to be a safe distance, he nevertheless adopts a great many precautions to prevent their return. To these precautions, which are very varied and often very curious, we must now direct our attention.

Thus, to begin with, failing to distinguish the immaterial and spiritual from the material and corporeal, he imagines that the spirits of the dead can be arrested by physical obstacles, and accordingly he proceeds to erect such obstacles in the way of the returning spirits, in the hope that the spirits

will be unable to surmount them and to reach him and his fellows ; in short, he attempts to barricade the road against them.

Thus, for example, some of the Tungus are said to make a barrier of snow and trees.¹

Amongst the Mangars, one of the fighting tribes of Nepal, when the mourners are returning from the grave, " one of their party goes ahead and makes a barricade of thorn bushes across the road, midway between the grave and the house of the deceased. On the top of the thorns he puts a big stone on which he takes his stand, holding a pot of burning incense in his left hand and some woollen thread in his right. One by one the mourners step on the stone and pass through the smoke of the incense to the other side of the barrier. As they pass, each takes a piece of thread from the man who holds the incense, and ties it round his neck. The object of this curious ceremony is to prevent the spirit of the dead from coming home with the mourners and establishing itself in its old haunts. Conceived of as a miniature man, it is believed to be unable to make its way on foot through the thorns, while the smell of the incense, to which all spirits are highly sensitive, prevents it from surmounting this obstacle on the shoulders of one of the mourners." ² The Chins of Burma burn their dead and collect their bones in an earthen pot. Afterwards, at a convenient

¹ T. de Pauly, *Description ethnographique des peuples de la Russie* (St. Petersburg, 1862), Peuples ouralo-altaïques, p. 71.

² H. H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, *Ethnographic Glossary*, ii. (Calcutta, 1891) pp. 95-96.

season, they carry away the pot containing the bones to the ancestral burial place. "When the people convey the pot of bones to the cemetery, they take with them some cotton-yarn, and whenever they come to any stream or other water, they stretch a thread across, whereby the spirit of the deceased, who accompanies them, may get across it too. When they have duly deposited the bones and food for the spirit in the cemetery they return home, after bidding the spirit to remain there and not to follow them back to the village. At the same time they block the way by which they return by putting a bamboo across the path."¹ Thus the mourners make the way to the grave as easy as possible for the ghost, but obstruct the way by which he might return from it.

Among the Kachins, another tribe of Burma, when the mourners are returning from the grave precautions have to be taken against any onslaughts by the spirit of the dead. A long bamboo is procured and split in half for about half-way or more up its length. One half is fixed in the ground, the other lying loose. Between the two halves a wedge is inserted about three or four inches off the ground, thus forming a triangle with the wedge as base. All those who have attended the funeral pass through the triangle, the priest and the butcher bringing up the rear. Either of these two knocks away the wedge after having passed over it and the two halves

¹ Rev. G. Whitehead, "Notes on the Chins of Burma", *Indian Antiquary*, xxxvi. (1907) pp. 214 *sqq.*

of the bamboo close with a snap. Those who have guns fire as many shots as they can into the bamboo to frighten away the dangerous spirit of the deceased. In this custom the split bamboo is the obstacle interposed between the mourners and the pursuing ghost ; while the two pieces of the bamboo are held apart the gateway is open to let the mourners pass through ; but when the two pieces are allowed to come together with a snap the gate is closed in the face of the baffled ghost and the mourners feel themselves to be safe from his pursuit.¹

Among the Moïs, a primitive tribe of Tonkin, when the mourners are returning from a burial, they make their way through a narrow passage constructed of reeds on trees, hoping thus to rid themselves of the ghost who will be brushed off by contact with the reeds or trees.²

Among the Lakhers, a tribe of Assam, when a death has taken place in a village all the people are very much afraid lest the spirit of the dead should enter their houses during the night and do them harm. To prevent this each householder places his paddy pestle across the doorway. When the dead person's spirit arrives at the door it sees the pestle, and, mistaking it for a huge serpent, retreats in terror. More intelligent spirits are said to recognize the pestle, but, fearing that it might fall and crush them if they attempt to enter, return whence they came. In Tisi, a village of the Lakhers, to prevent

¹ W. J. S. Carrapiett, *The Kachin Tribes of Burma* (Rangoon, 1929), p. 47.

² H. Baudesson, *Au pays des superstitions et des rites* (Paris, 1932), p. 130.

the ghost of the deceased from re-entering his house on the night of the funeral, they take a hen, and standing on the ladder leading to the house, cut off its feathers, allowing them to fall on each side of the ladder. These feathers are supposed to form a barrier which the ghost cannot cross. The cutting of the feathers is meant to intimate to the ghost that if he ventures to return to the house they will cut him up just as they cut off the feathers.¹

Among the Dhobas, a primitive tribe of the Central Province of India, on the ninth, eleventh or thirteenth day after a death, when the ceremonial impurity ends, the male members of the sept are shaved on the banks of a river and their hair is left lying there. When they start home they spread some thorns and two stones across the path. Then, as the first man steps over the thorns, he takes up one of the stones in his hand and passes it behind him to the second, and each man successively passes it back as he steps over the thorns, the last man throwing the stone behind the thorns. Thus the dead man's spirit in the shape of the stone is separated from the living and prevented from accompanying them home.² In this custom the ghost is apparently supposed to adhere to the hair of the mourners, till the hair has been shorn off and left on the bank of the river ; and though the ghost attempts to pursue the mourners home, he is stopped on his way by the barrier of thorns.

¹ N. E. Parry, *The Lakhers Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, ii. (London, 1916) pp. 516,

² R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and* 517.

Again, when the Aheriyas of the North-Western Provinces of India burn the corpse they fling pebbles in the direction of the pyre to prevent the spirit accompanying them. In the Himalayas when a man is returning from the cremation ground, after the burning of a corpse, he places a thorny bush on the road wherever it is crossed by another path, and the nearest male relative of the deceased on seeing this, puts a stone on it, and pressing it down with his feet, prays the spirit of the dead man not to trouble him.¹ Here again the thorns serve as a barrier against the pursuing spirit. In India the custom of erecting barriers against the return of the ghost appears to be by no means confined to the wild tribes of the present day, but to go back to a remote antiquity. It was the ancient rule that when the mourners left the cremation ground the officiating priest raised a barrier of stones between the dead and the living.² In the *Satapatha-Brâhmana*, an ancient Indian book of religious ritual, it is said that the officiating priest, having fetched a clod from the boundary, deposits it midway between the grave and the village, saying: "This I put up as a bulwark for the living, lest another of them should go unto that thing; may they live for a hundred plentiful harvests, and shut out death from themselves by a mountain". The priest is said thus to make a

¹ W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, ii. (London, 1896) p. 57.

² W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (edited by

R. E. Enthoven) (London, 1926), p. 237, referring to *Rajendralala Mitra*, ii. 123, 136; E. J. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, ii. (Allahabad, 1884) p. 832.

boundary between the dead forefathers and their living descendants.¹ The great Marātha leader Śivaji is said to have crawled through a perforated stone, to escape from the ghost of the Mogul General he had killed.²

Among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo the mourners who are the last to leave the grave plant sharpened stakes in the ground, so that the spirit of the dead may not follow them to the house, the stakes planted in the ground being supposed to prevent its return.³ Similarly the Kiwai of British New Guinea put up sticks on the path which the ghost is supposed to have taken, in order to block the road against its return.⁴

Among the Kpelle, a negro tribe of Liberia, ropes are stretched round the base of a house or the walls of a town to ward off evil spirits, among whom mischievous ghosts are no doubt included. Between one of the villages and a graveyard two posts used to be planted in the ground with wattle-work stretched between them, in order to prevent the ghosts from coming from the graveyard to molest the villagers.⁵

In Loango, similarly, a cord protected by an

¹ *Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, translated by J. E. Egeling (Oxford, 1900), Part V. p. 440; *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlv.

² J. Abbott, *The Keys of Power* (London, 1932), p. 504.

³ E. H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1911), p. 138; cf. J. Per-

ham, "Sea Dyak Religion", *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 14 (1884), p. 291.

⁴ G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea* (London, 1927), p. 282.

⁵ D. Westermann, *Die Kpelle; ein Negerstamm in Liberia* (Leipsic, 1921), pp. 203-204.

appropriate charm is stretched and a furrow is traced all round a village. Further, a sacrificial victim, generally a goat, is carried round the whole circumference and is afterwards sacrificed. If these precautions fail to keep out the ghosts the inhabitants are at their wits' end, and think of abandoning the site altogether.¹

Like the inhabitants of the Old World, the aborigines of America have sometimes been wont to erect barriers as a protection against the intrusion of unwelcome ghosts. Thus among the Shuswap of British Columbia mourners use thorn-bushes for pillow and bed in order to keep away the ghost of the deceased. They also lay thorn-bushes all round their beds for the same purpose.² So among the Bella Coola Indians, another tribe of British Columbia, the bed of a mourner must be protected against the ghost of the deceased. The relatives of the dead stick a thorn-bush at each corner of their bed. After four days these bushes are thrown into the water. Mourners must rise early and go into the woods, where they stick four thorn-bushes into the ground, at the corners of a square, in which they must cleanse themselves by rubbing their bodies with cedar branches. They also swim in ponds. After swimming they cleave four small trees and creep through the clefts, following the course of the

¹ E. Pechuel-Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2. (Stuttgart, 1907) p. 310.

² Fr. Boas, Second General Re-

port on the Indians of British Columbia, *Sixth Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada (Report of the British Association for 1890)*, separate reprint, p. 91.

sun. This they do on four subsequent mornings, cleaving new trees every day.¹ In this latter custom the passage of the mourner through cleft trees is another mode of evading the pursuit of the ghost, just as we have seen that Kachin mourners returning from the grave creep through a split bamboo for a similar purpose. Among the Thompson Indians, another tribe of British Columbia, after a death, a string of deer-hoofs with a short line attached was hung across the inside of the winter house, to prevent the ghost from entering. During four successive nights an old woman pulled at the string frequently to make the hoofs rattle. Branches of juniper were also placed at the door of the house, or were burned in the fire for the same purpose.² Some of the Algonkin Indians of Canada used to stretch nets round their huts in the meshes of which they sought to catch any spirits of the dead who might attempt to enter from the wigwams of their neighbours.³ Among the Huichol Indians of Mexico no strong liquor is drunk at burial feasts. Instead, a cross, made from a kind of *salvia*, is hung up in the house to prevent the soul of the deceased from re-entering the house and to keep him from getting into the

¹ *Seventh Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada (Report of the British Association for 1891, separately paged extract), Third Report on the Indians of British Columbia, by Dr. Fr. Boas, p. 13.* On the custom of creeping through cleft trees or other narrow openings to escape from a ghost, see *The Golden Bough*, Part VII. *Balder the*

Beautiful, ii. pp. 174 *sqq.*

² James Teit, "The Thompson Indians of British Columbia" (*Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, ii. Anthropology I.; *The Jessup North Pacific Expedition*, iv. (April, 1900) p. 331.

³ *Relations des Jésuites* 1639, vol. i. (Quebec, 1858) p. 44.

distillery and spoiling the wine. For the same purpose branches are put upon the paths leading to the distillery and the jars of liquor are covered.¹

As usual, savage custom has its counterpart in civilized Europe. In Savoy there is a curious belief attached to the custom of closing all doors and windows when a funeral is about to pass. The peasants say that if this were not done the soul of the dead might escape into a house through some open door or window.² This belief probably gives the clue to the common European custom of lowering the blinds of all windows in a house of mourning.

Among the barriers which primitive man attempts to interpose between himself and the dreaded spirits of the dead, a prominent place is taken by water and fire. Thus, to begin with water, after burying a body the Ngarigo of South-east Australia were wont to cross a river in order to prevent the ghost from pursuing them.³ Obviously they shared the common opinion that ghosts for some reason are unable to cross water.

The natives of Nias, an island to the west of Sumatra, attribute contagious diseases to the ill-will of the spirits of the dead : hence, the bodies of persons who die of such diseases do not receive regular obsequies, but are either thrown away in the forest or are buried in an island, to prevent the return of their dangerous ghosts.⁴

¹ C. Lumholz, *Unknown Mexico*, ii. (London, 1903) pp. 243-244.

² Estella Canziani, *Costumes, Traditions and Songs of Savoy* (London, 1911), p. 136.

³ A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-east Australia* (London, 1904), p. 461.

⁴ Elio Modigliani, *L' Isola delle Donne* (Milan, 1895), p. 198.

The use of water as a barrier against a ghost may be illustrated from a practice of the Ainu of Japan, as it is described from personal experience by the Rev. John Batchelor, our principal authority on these primitive people. He had visited the grave of an old woman, in the company of the woman's son. The son would by no means approach within fifty yards of the grave for fear of his mother's ghost. "Upon returning to the hut, the man, together with the women, brought a bowl of water to the door, and requested me to wash my face and hands. Whilst at my ablutions the women commenced to beat me and brush me down with *inao* (sacred whittled sticks). Upon inquiring into the ideas which moved the people to act in this manner, I discovered that the washing was to purify me from all uncleanness contracted at the grave through contact with the ghost of the deceased, and that the beating and brushing with *inao* was to drive away all evil influences and diseases she may have aimed at me. The water and *inao* were the antidote against, and the corrective for, the evil intentions the spirit is supposed to have directed towards me out of her wicked spite for trespassing on her domain."¹

Among the Taungthu of Upper Burma, when the corpse is carried outside the house, the chief mourner, widow or widower, son or daughter, pours water over the body and says: "As a stream divides

¹ Rev. John Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-lore* (London, 1901), pp. 549, 550.

countries so may the water poured now divide us".¹

In the *Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa* it is prescribed that seven furrows should be dug on the north side of the grave and filled with water, for sin not to pass beyond, for indeed sin cannot pass beyond seven rivers. The mourners returning from the grave throw three stones each into these northern furrows and pass over them, saying: "Here floweth the stony one; hold on to each other, rise and cross over, ye friends: here will we leave behind what unkind spirits there be, and will cross over to auspicious nourishments". On this custom a commentator observes: "These seven furrows are straight, running from west to east; thus separating the grave from the north, the world of men". In the text just quoted the seven furrows are represented as a barrier which sin cannot cross, but this moral explanation of the custom is probably a priestly interpretation. We may suspect that the water of the seven furrows was originally intended to prevent the ghost from following the mourners on their return from the grave.²

In Africa, among the Bangala of the Upper Congo, the Rev. John H. Weeks witnessed a good example of the use of water as a barrier to divide the dead from the living. He says: "Walking one day in Monsembe I saw an incident that re-

¹ G. W. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I. vol. i. (Rangoon, 1900) p. 554.

² *Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, translated by Julius Egeling, Part V. (Oxford, 1900) pp. 437 sqq.

called Burns' 'Tam o' Shanter' to my mind. There had been a death in a family and the relatives had just performed all the necessary rites and ceremonies and were returning to their homes. A small trench some twenty feet long was dug with a hoe. The relatives took up their position on the side of the trench nearest to the grave, the medicine-man stood on the other side, and his assistant was placed at the end of the trench with a large calabash of water. At a signal the water was poured into the trench, and while it was running the medicine-man took each person by the hand, and mumbling an incantation pulled him or her over the running water. When all had been pulled over, one by one, the water was allowed to run until the calabash was empty. I asked the reason of the ceremony, and they told me that it was to keep the spirit of their deceased, and buried, relative from following them. It was very evident from the rites observed that they thought the spirits could not cross running water."¹

With regard to the natives of the Gabun district we are told by the Rev. Robert Nassau that "when they have finished the work of burial, they are in great fear, and are to run rapidly to their village, or to the nearest body of water, river or lake or sea. If in their running one should trip and fall it is a sign that he will soon die. They plunge into the

¹ John H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals* (London, 1913), pp. 102-103; cf. *id.*, "Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo River", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xxxix. (1909) p. 454.

water, as a means of 'purification' from possible defilement. The object of this purification is not simply to cleanse the body, but to remove the presence or contact of the spirit of the dead man or of any other spirit of possible evil influence, lest they should have ill-luck in their fishing, hunting and other work."¹

A much attenuated form of the water barrier against ghosts is observed amongst the Basutos; a man with holy water follows the funeral, sprinkling with the holy water the footprints of the men who carry the corpse.²

Widows and widowers are often supposed to be peculiarly liable to be haunted by the ghosts of their deceased spouses, and special precautions are accordingly taken to protect them from these importunate spirits. The Bakongo of the Lower Congo River resort to the water barrier as the means of guarding both widows and widowers in these melancholy circumstances. In the case of the widow, "if it is the woman's first husband who has died, she must take his bed, and one or two articles he commonly used, to a running stream. The bed is put in the middle of the stream and the articles placed on it. The woman washes herself well in the stream and afterwards sits on the bed. The medicine-man goes to her and dips her three times in the water and dresses her. Then the bed and articles are broken and the pieces thrown down-stream to float away. She is

¹ Rev. Robert H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), pp. 218-219.

² *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie* (1877), p. 84.

now led out of the stream, and a raw egg is broken and given to her to swallow. A toad is killed and some of its blood is rubbed on her lips, and a fowl is killed and hung by the roadside. These sacrifices having been made to the spirit of the departed one, she is free to return to her town.”¹ Clearly, the Bakongo suppose that by placing the widow in her bed in the middle of a river they oppose an insuperable obstacle to the attentions of her husband’s ghost; but to make assurance doubly sure, they afterwards seek to pacify the ghost by a sacrifice. The treatment of a widower among the Bakongo is somewhat similar, if the woman was his first wife. He must stay in his house for six days, but on the morning of the seventh day the male relatives of his deceased wife come to escort him to a running stream. On arrival at the stream one of the kinsmen takes the bed and throws it into the water. Then he scrapes the widower’s tongue, shaves him, pares his nails, makes three cuts in his arm, and finally immerses him three times in the river, to “wash away the death”, or rather, as we may suppose, his wife’s ghost.²

With this African application of the water barrier to protect the widow we may compare a somewhat similar custom observed by the Papuans of Geelvink Bay in Dutch New Guinea. A widow must not leave her dwelling for several months, for the spirit of her dead husband is still associated with her, and

¹ J. H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo* (London, 1914), pp. 172, 173.

² J. H. Weeks, *op. cit.* p. 173.

if she went about the men who met her might be taken ill or die. Her hair is shorn in sign of mourning. After her hair is shorn, she is bathed, and in order that she may not meet any one in taking her bath, a canoe is brought under the house, a hole is made in the floor and she descends into the boat.¹ Thus these Papuan widows, like their African sisters, are surrounded by water as a barrier against their husbands' ghosts.

Among peoples of the lower culture, it is a common custom for mourners after a burial or a funeral to plunge completely into water. The custom is usually interpreted as a mode of cleansing the mourner from the impurity which he has contracted by contact with the dead. But in all such cases it is safe to conjecture that the original motive was fear of the ghost, and a wish to interpose a barrier of water between the living and the dead. And even when the custom has degenerated into a simple ablution of some part of the mourner's person, or into a still slighter contact with water, it seems probable that the underlying motive has been a desire to wash off the clinging ghost, or otherwise to get rid of him by the interposition of water. With regard to the Hindoos, we are told that they regard themselves as defiled by simple presence at a funeral, and immediately after contracting this defilement they go and plunge into water, and no

¹ J. L. van Hasselt, "Eenig Aanteekeningen arngaande de bewoners der Nord-Westkust van Nieu Guinea, meer bepaaldelijk de Stam

der Noefoorezen", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde*, xxxii. (1889) p. 591

one dare enter his house before he has thus purified himself.¹

Among the people of Ambaca in Angola, the surviving relative, whether husband or wife, is carried from the grave on the back of a person of the same sex and thrown into the river for ablution or purification. On returning to his house, the person so purified is secluded; he may not converse with any person of the opposite sex, nor eat anything that has been boiled, nor wash himself² for eight days.

In some parts of the Cameroons all present at a burial throw handfuls of earth on the grave and then run away lest they should die the same death as the deceased. Those who live near the coast afterwards throw themselves into the sea, but the inland people in the like circumstances plunge into a river.³

A traveller in the Cameroons tells us how, after witnessing the execution of a man accused of witchcraft, the whole population of the village, men, women and children, ran to the shore, and stripping themselves of their clothes, bathed in the sea to wash off, as he says, the witchcraft, but probably rather the dangerous spirit of the sorcerer just set free from its earthly tenement.⁴

Among the Kaffirs of South Africa all persons who touched a corpse or any of the dead man's

¹ J. A. Dubois, *Mœurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde* (Paris, 1825), i. p. 244.

² F. T. Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London, 1861), p. 296 sq.

³ C. Cunym, "De Libreville au Cameroun", *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, xvii. (1896) pp. 340-341.

⁴ R. Buchholz, *Reisen in West-Afrika* (Leipsic, 1880), p. 143.

effects were obliged to go through certain ceremonies and then to bathe in running water before they might associate with their companions.¹

Among the Ba-Ila-speaking tribes of Northern Rhodesia, when the grave has been filled up and before the diggers have stepped off from it, water is brought and all who have handled the corpse wash their hands over the grave. This they do, it is said, to cleanse them from the defilement they have contracted.²

Among the Fangs of West Africa, after the death of a chief, his wives are shut up in a hut, where they have to stay five days mourning for him. On the evening of the fifth day they lie down on the felled trunks of banana trees laid side by side, and all the people of the village, from the youngest to the oldest, pour water over them. The women have to lie there all night without stirring, and next morning their heads are carefully shaved with bits of broken glass. Afterwards the villagers form a double line, men on one side, women on the other, armed with swords and other weapons, and the women have to run the gauntlet between these two rows, being well belaboured in their passage.³ In this custom the beating of the widows is doubtless a secondary precaution to rid them of their husband's ghost, lest

¹ G. McCall Theal, *Ethnography and Condition of South Africa* (London, 1919), p. 222; Dos Santos, in *Records of South-Eastern Africa*, edited by G. McCall Theal, vii. (1901) p. 401.

² E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale,

The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia, ii. (London, 1920) p. 106.

³ P. Trilles, "Chez les Fangs : leurs mœurs, leur langue, leur religion", *Missions Catholiques*, xxx. (1898) pp. 521, 522.

he should be clinging to their persons, despite the sousing of their bodies with water.

Among the Nyanja-speaking peoples of the Nyasaland Protectorate, when a grave has been filled in the mourners go to a river and bathe in it, the men up-stream and the women down-stream.¹

When the Damara or Herero of South-West Africa have buried a body they pour bowls of water on the grave before retiring from it.²

In North Guinea, after a corpse has been buried, the bearers rush to the water and wash themselves thoroughly before they return to the town.³

Among the Bare-speaking Toradjas of Central Celebes the mourners in returning from a burial step in vessels of water, doubtless in order to escape from the ghost.⁴ In New Zealand, among the Maoris, all who had attended a funeral used to betake themselves to the nearest stream and plunge several times head under in the water.⁵ In Tahiti all who had assisted at a burial fled precipitately and plunged into the sea, casting also in the sea the garments they had worn.⁶

Among the Singhalese of Ceylon the funeral party bathe before returning to the house, and are

¹ R. Sutherland Rattray, *Some Folk-Lore, Stories and Songs in Chinyanja* (London, 1907), p. 94.

² C. J. Andersson, *Lake Ngami* (London, 1856), p. 467.

³ J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa* (London, 1856), ch. 17.

⁴ N. Adriani in A. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradjas van Mid-den Celebes*, ii. pp. 98, 99.

⁵ W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand* (London, 1835), p. 137; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), p. 224; *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xv. (1843) pp. 23-24.

⁶ Rev. William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832-1836), i. p. 403.

supplied by the washerwoman with newly washed clothes; during their absence the house is well cleansed and purified by the sprinkling of water mixed with cow-dung.¹ The Oraons of Bengal after attending a burial always bathe before they return to the village.² In the Shan States of Burma, it is said that similarly all persons who have handled a corpse are obliged to bathe before they return to the village.³

Among the Kiwai of British New Guinea, mourners returning from a burial swim in the sea. Those who have carried the dead body spit ginger over their hands and afterwards rub them with a sweet-smelling herb. Until they have done so, nobody will touch his own body with his hands. After washing they smear face and body with clay, which is renewed from time to time.⁴ In this custom the water, the ginger and the clay are probably alike regarded as protectives against the ghost. Similarly the natives of Rook, an island off the north-east coast of New Guinea, go and purify themselves in the sea immediately after a burial.⁵

Among the aborigines of America the use of water as a barrier against the dead appears to be familiar. Thus of the Songish Indians of Van-

¹ A. Perera, "Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life", *Indian Antiquary*, xxi. p. 382.

² E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 262; Sarat Chandra Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), p. 175.

³ "Notes on the Manners, Customs, Religion and Superstitions of

the Tribes inhabiting the Shan States", *Indian Antiquary*, xxi. p. 119.

⁴ G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea* (London, 1927), p. 265.

⁵ P. Ambrosoli, "Extrait d'une notice sur l'Île de Rook", *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xxvii. (1855) p. 363.

couver Island we are told that after a burial the whole tribe used to go down to the sea and bathe, wash their heads and cut their hair.¹ Among the Tarahumare Indians of Mexico on the occasion of a death by suicide all the women, after bidding farewell to the dead body, ran quickly into a deep water-hole, splashing into it, clothes and all, that nothing from the dead might attach itself to them.² In ancient Mexico all those who had helped to bury a king of Michoacan bathed afterwards.³ Amongst the Mosquito Indians all persons returning from a funeral undergo a lustration in the river.⁴ Among some of the Indians of Peru ten days after a death, the relatives of the deceased used to assemble and conduct the next of kin to a river or its springs where they thoroughly washed and scrubbed him to rid him, no doubt, of the contagion of death, or rather, as we may surmise, of the ghost of the deceased, who might be adhering to him.⁵

In civilized Europe also the barrier of water has sometimes been resorted to as a protection against the spirits of the dead. Thus, for example, in some parts of Transylvania "it is usual for the procession returning from a funeral to take its way through a river or stream of running water, sometimes going

¹ *Sixth Report of the North-Western Tribes of Canada (Report of the British Association for 1890)*, Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia, by Dr. Fr. Boas, p. 23.

² C. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (London, 1903), p. 389.

³ H. H. Bancroft, *Native Races of*

the Pacific States, ii. p. 621; Bras-seut de Bourbourg, *Histoire des nations civilisées de Mexique et de l'Amérique Centrale* (Paris, 1857-1859), iii. p. 85.

⁴ H. H. Bancroft, *op. cit.* i. p. 744.

⁵ Padre Pablo de Arriaga, *Extirpación de la Idolatría del Peru* (Lima, 1621), p. 33.

a mile or two out of their way to avoid all bridges, thus making sure that the vagrant soul of the beloved deceased will not follow them back to the house".¹ The Wends of Geisnitz make a point of passing through running water after a burial; in winter, if the river is frozen, they break the ice in order to wade through the water.² In modern Mytilini and Crete if a man will not rest in his grave they dig up the body, ferry it across to a little island, and bury it there.³ The Kythniotes of the Archipelago have a similar custom, except that they do not take the trouble to bury the body a second time, but simply tumble the bones out of a bag and leave them to bleach on the rocks, trusting to the "silver streak" of sea to imprison the ghost.⁴ In many parts of Germany, in modern Greece and in Cyprus, water is poured out behind the corpse as it is being carried from the house, in the belief that, if the ghost returns, he will not be able to cross it.⁵ Sometimes,

¹ E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest* (Edinburgh and London, 1888), p. 316.

² K. Haupt, *Sagenbuch der Lau- sitz* (Leipsic, 1862-1863), i. p. 254.

³ B. Schmidt, *Das Volkleben der Neugriechen* (Leipsic, 1871), p. 168.

⁴ J. T. Bent, *The Cyclades* (London, 1885), p. 441 sq.

⁵ A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 368; J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen in Altmark* (Berlin, 1839), p. 77; F. Nork, *Sitten und Gebräuche der Deutschen und ihrer Nachbarvölker*, p. 479; A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube* (Berlin, 1869), p. 737; C. M. Rochholz, *Deutscher Glaube*

und Brauch (Berlin, 1867), i. p. 177; G. Lammert, *Volksmedizin und medizinischer Aberglaube aus Bayern* (Wurzburg, 1869), p. 105; M. Toppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren* (Danzig, 1867), p. 108; A. Witschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Thüringen* (Vienna, 1878), ii. p. 258; Panzer, *Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie* (Munich, 1848-1855), i. p. 257; *Folk-Lore Journal*, ii. p. 170; C. Wachsmuth, *Das alte Griechenland im neuen* (Bonn, 1864), p. 119; Tettau und Temme, *Die Volkssagen Ostpreussens, Litauens und Westpreussens* (Berlin, 1837), p. 286; A. Kuhn, *Sagen, Gebräuche und Märchen aus Westphalen* (Leipsic, 1848), ii. p. 49.

by night, the Germans pour holy water before the door; the ghost is thought to stand and whimper on the further side.¹ In some parts of the North-East of Scotland after a death the neighbours did not yoke their horses unless there was a stream of running water between them and the house in which the dead body lay.²

In ancient Greece the relations washed themselves after the funerals.³ So long as a corpse was in the house a vessel of water stood before the street door, that all who left the house might sprinkle themselves with it.⁴ Sometimes after a death the house of mourning was sprinkled with salt water.⁵ In old Rome the barrier of water after a death survived in a much attenuated form: it sufficed to carry water three times round the persons who had been engaged in the funeral and to sprinkle them with the water.⁶ The ancient Scythians in mourning washed themselves and took a vapour bath.⁷ A very peculiar case of our water barrier is recorded by Plutarch; he says that when a man had died of dropsy or consumption his children had to sit with their feet in water till the corpse had decayed.⁸ Apparently,

¹ Wuttke, *op. cit.* § 748; Rochholz, *op. cit.* i. p. 186.

² Rev. Walter Gregor, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-east of Scotland* (London, 1881), p. 207.

³ Scholia on Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 838.

⁴ Pollux, viii. 65; Hesychius and Suidas, *s.v.* ἀπόδαινον; cf. Wachsmuth, *op. cit.* p. 109.

⁵ H. Roehl, *Inscriptiones Graecae Antiquissimae* (Berlin, 1883), No. 395; G. Dittenberger, *Sylloge In-*

scriptionum Graecarum, No. 468; P. Cauer, *Delectus Inscriptionum Graecarum propter dialectum memorabilium*, 2 (Leipsic, 1883), No. 530.

⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi. 228. Servius on this passage speaks of carrying fire round similarly. We shall return presently to the barrier of fire.

⁷ Herodotus, iv. 73, 75.

⁸ Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, c. 14.

although Plutarch does not say so, this was a precaution to prevent the ghost of a man who had died of dropsy from attacking his surviving children and afflicting them with the malady which had proved fatal to him. We have seen that among the Toradjas of Celebes mourners on returning from a funeral planted their feet in vessels of water, apparently to evade the pursuit of the ghost. For a similar purpose apparently, when a man has died of dropsy among the natives of Rajamahall in India, they do not bury the body but throw it into a river and then bathe themselves in another part of the river.¹ Thus they adopt in a double form the barrier of water against the ghost of a man who has died of dropsy ; first they throw his body into a river and then they bathe themselves in another part of the same river, so making assurance doubly sure. Alike in the Greek and the Indian custom the notion seems to be that on homoeopathic principles water is the best preservative against death by dropsy. So similar is the rut in which error has flowed in ancient Greece and in modern India.

¹ Th. Shaw, "On the Inhabitants near Rajamahall", *Asiatic Researches*, iv. (Calcutta, 1795).

LECTURE III

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IN the last lecture I dealt with some of the barriers which primitive man erects to prevent the spirits of the dead from returning to haunt and trouble the living ; in particular I described the barrier of water which he sometimes adopts for that purpose. Often with the same object he has recourse to a barrier of fire.¹

Thus, for example, among some of the Tartars it used to be customary for all persons returning from a burial to leap over a fire made for the purpose, " in order that the dead man might not follow them ; for apparently in their opinion he would be afraid of the fire ".²

In the like circumstances some Tartars instead of leaping over a fire used to pass between two fires, but the object of the passage was no doubt the same.³

Among the Yakut no one but the gravediggers accompanies a corpse to the grave, and even they hasten to complete their work and return home ; on

¹ On the barrier of fire against the spirits of the dead, cf. *The Golden Bough*, Part IV. *Balder the Beautiful*, ii. pp. 17-19.

² J. G. Gmelin, *Reise durch Si-*

berien (Göttingen, 1751-1752), i. 333.

³ Johannes de Plano de Carpini, *Historia Mongolorum* (d'Avezac edition) (Paris, 1838), c. iv.

their way back they do not stop or look behind, and when they enter the gate of the village, they and the animals which drew the coffin to the grave must pass through a fire made of the straw on which the dead man lay and the wood left from the making of the coffin. Other things which have been in contact with the dead, such as the shovel, are also broken and burnt.¹ According to another authority, "the Yakut bury their dead as a rule on the day of the death, and in order not to take the demon of death home with them, they kindle fires on the way back from the burial and jump over them in the belief that the demon of death, who dreads fire, will not follow them, and that in this way they will be freed from the persecutions of the hated demon of death".² In this passage the demon of death is probably a mistake of the writer for the ghost of the deceased; the conception of a demon of death is by no means primitive. In Sikkim, when members of the Khambu caste have buried a corpse, all persons present at the burial "adjourn to a stream for a bath of purification, and, on re-entering the house, have to tread on a bit of burning cloth, to prevent the evil spirits who attend at funerals from following them in".³ Here again, the barrier of fire is probably directed not so much against evil spirits in general as against the spirit of the dead. It will be observed

¹ M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia* (Oxford, 1914), p. 160.

² W. L. Priklonski, "Über das Schamanthum bei den Jakuten" in A. Bastian's *Allerlei aus Volks- und Menschenkunde* (Berlin, 1888), i.

319; cf. V. Priklonski, "Todtengebräuche der Jakuten", *Globus*, lix. (1891) p. 85.

³ J. A. H. Louis, *The Gates of Thibet* (Calcutta, 1894), p. 116.

that these people seek to protect themselves against the spiritual danger by a barrier of water as well as by a barrier of fire.

In China, after a corpse has been interred fires are kindled at the four corners of the cemetery to prevent the soul of the deceased from wandering away from the grave.¹ And when the funeral party returns to the house a fire of straw is kindled at the door, and all the members of the family pass over it and through the flames, after which they believe themselves to be safe from the pursuit of the ghost.² But sometimes as an additional precaution on entering the house, they wash their eyes with water in which the leaves of the pomeloe tree have been boiled.³ Thus they reinforce the barrier of fire by a barrier of water. Again in China, when a coroner has been holding an inquest on a dead body, the mandarins who have attended the inquest step over a small fire before they enter their palanquins to be carried home, and the ceremony is repeated at the door of their house.⁴

Among the Oraons of Bengal on the return of a funeral party to the house a fire of chaff is kindled in the courtyard and oil poured on it to create a smoke. Over this smoke every one of the party places the palms of his or her hands by way of ceremonial purification.⁵ Among the Birhors, a

¹ P. J. Dols, "La Vie chinoise dans la province de Kan-sou (Chine)", *Anthropos* x.-xi. (1915-1916) p. 756.

² Dols, *op. cit.* p. 741.

³ J. H. Gray, *China* (London, 1878), i. p. 305; cf. p. 287.

⁴ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China* (Leyden, 1892), p. 137; cf. *id.* p. 32.

⁵ Sarat Chandra Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), p. 175.

primitive tribe of Chota Nagpur in India, after a body has been buried, standing at the grave the son or grandson of the deceased takes up a lighted torch in his right hand and some one stands beside him pressing his left eye with one hand. With his left eye thus closed, he walks round the grave three times, and then puts the torch over the corpse's mouth.¹ Thus the heir appears to place a barrier of fire between himself and the dead. And among the same people, when the funeral party has returned from the grave they bathe and have to undergo a further ceremony of purification by fire. In their absence a fire of charcoal has been prepared by the women, and on the approach of the funeral party a quantity of aromatic resin of the *sal* tree is sprinkled on the fire to produce a strong-smelling smoke. Arriving there each one of the party touches the fire with his left great toe and waves his left hand over the fire.² Thus, once more a barrier of fire reinforces a barrier of water. Among the Lakhers of Assam, when a dead man has been buried in another village, before leaving the lands of the village in which the funeral has taken place, a fire is kindled, and the visitors step over the fire. A disease-bearing spirit cannot pass over a fire and so is unable to follow the visitors home.³ Among the Lhota Nagas, another tribe of Assam, when a death by accident has taken place, the friends of the dead man build a little shed and put some clothes and

¹ Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Bir-* p. 272.
hors (Ranchi, 1925), pp. 270, 271.

² Sarat Chandra Roy, *op. cit.* ³ N. E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (London, 1932), p. 405.

food in it. On the day after the death, an old man lights a fire in front of the house and sacrifices a cock. All the members of the family come out of the house stark naked and, after stepping over the fire, enter the shed, where they remain six days without speaking to any one, their food being provided by friends.¹ As we shall see later on, the ghosts of all persons who die by accident or violence are particularly dreaded, and special precautions have to be taken against them. The example of the Lhota Nagas is a case in point. Among these same Lhota Nagas, when a man has been drowned on a fishing expedition the accident is announced in the village before the return of the fishers. An old man thereupon comes forth from the village and lights a fire on the path by which the fishers are returning ; and every one of the fishers must step over the fire before he returns to the village.² Among the lower castes of Upper India, when the mourners return from a funeral they touch a stone, cow-dung, iron, fire and water, which have been placed outside the house in readiness when the corpse was removed, and after a cremation the officiating Brahman touches fire in order to purify himself and to bar the return of the ghost.³ In these latter cases the mere touching of fire is probably a later substitute for an older custom of stepping over it. In the Nicobar

¹ W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, edited by R. E. Enthoven (London, 1926), p. 239 sq.

(London, 1922), p. 162.

² J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*

³ W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (London, 1896), ii. p. 59.

Islands, while a dead body is lying in a house, a fire is kindled and maintained at the foot of the house ladder. The intention of the fire is said to be partly to keep the disembodied spirit far off, partly to apprise friends at a distance of the sad occurrence. The fire is either kindled directly by the friction of sticks or is obtained from another fire, which is known to have been so ignited.¹ From this account it appears that the soul of the deceased is supposed to have quitted the house before the burial, and the object of the fire is to prevent it from re-entering the dwelling.

In Africa also the barrier of fire against the spirits of the dead meets us in a variety of forms. Thus we read of a Bushman who, fearing to be haunted by the ghost of his dead wife, first dashed the head of the corpse to pieces, and after burying the body, lighted a fire upon the grave, as an additional precaution to prevent the return of her spirit.² Among the Tumbuka of Nyasaland, when a burial party is returning from the grave, they are met by a medicine-man who has kindled a great fire on the path into which he has thrown some roots; each member of the party must pass through the flames before he returns to the village.³ Among the Atonga of what used to be called British Central Africa, mourners returning from the grave bathe in water. Then the chief undertaker fetches a torch of grass pulled from the

¹ E. H. Man, *The Nicobar Islands and their People* (London, n.d.), p. 133. *Southern Africa* (London, 1815), ii. p. 61.

² Henry Lichtenstein, *Travels in* *People* (London, 1914), p. 159.

³ D. Fraser, *Winning a Primitive*

roof of the dead man's hut, lights it at the fire in the same hut, jumps over it himself, and then holds it a few inches from the ground for the whole party to jump over, one by one. After being rubbed with certain roots on back and front by a woman they are deemed to be sufficiently purified to return home.¹ Among the Boloki of the Upper Congo, a good instance of the barrier by fire was witnessed by Mr. Weeks; he says: "One day I saw an old woman whom I knew very well sitting in the centre of a ring of fire, and upon inquiry I found that she had had much to do with preparing a corpse for burial, and at the close of the ceremony she had to be purified. A ring of fire made of small sticks encircled her; she took a leaf, dried it, crunched it in her fist, and sprinkled it on the fire, moving her hands, palms downwards, over the fire ring. When the fire had died out a witch-doctor took hold of the little finger of her left hand with the little finger of his right hand, and, lifting her arm, he drew her out of the fire circle purified. She was now supposed to be cleansed from all contamination with the dead."² Among the Fangs of West Africa, after a month of mourning, the widows of the deceased are obliged to step across a fire in the middle of the village; and while some leaves are still burning under their feet, they sit down and their heads are shaved. From this moment they are purified from mourning, or, as the writer who reports it suggests, delivered from the

¹ A. Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), pp. 162-163. ² J. H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals* (London, 1913), p. 102.

ghost of their husband and they now can be passed on to his heirs.¹

Among the Ewe-speaking people of the Slave Coast, "in Agweh a widow is supposed to remain shut up for six months in the room in which her husband is buried, during which time she may not wash or change her clothes. Food is carried to her by the family. According to report, in bygone days widows underwent a kind of fumigation in these burial chambers, a fire being lighted on the floor and strewn with red peppers, till they were nearly suffocated by the fumes. At the end of the period of mourning the widows wash, shave the head, pare the nails, and put on clean cloths; the old cloths, the hair and the nail-parings being burned. At Agweh men who have lost their head wives do this also, after having remained shut up in a room of the house for eight days."² The purification of widows by fire and water on the Gold Coast has been described as follows by Miss Mary Kingsley. "To the surf and its spirits the sea-board dwelling Tschwis bring women who have had children and widows, both after a period of eight days from the birth of the child, or the death of the husband. A widow remains in the house until this period has elapsed, neglecting her person, eating little food, and sitting on the bare floor in the attitude of mourning. On the Gold Coast they bury very quickly, as they are

¹ E. Allegret, "Les Idées religieuses des Faïns (Afrique Occidentale)", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, i. (1904) p. 220.

² A. B. Ellis, *The Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London, 1890), p. 160.

always telling you, usually on the day after death, rarely later than the third day, even among the natives, and the spirit, or *srah*, of the dead man is supposed to hang about his wives and his house until the ceremony of purification is carried out. This is done, needless to say, with uproar. The relatives of each wife go to her house with musical instruments—I mean tom-toms and that sort of thing—and they take a quantity of mint, which grows wild in this country, with them. This mint they burn, some of it in the house, the rest they place upon pans of live coals and carry round the widow as she goes in their midst down to the surf, her relatives singing aloud to the *srah* of the departed husband, telling him that now he is dead and has done with the lady, he must leave her. This singing serves to warn all the women who are not relations to get out of the way, which of course they always carefully do, because if they were to see the widow their own husbands would die within the year.” Arrived at the surf, they strip every rag off the widow and throw it into the surf; and the widow is arrayed in a suit of dark blue baft in which she returns home.¹

The Goajire Indians of Colombia keep up great fires at night in the village to ward off the ghosts of their dead enemies, who are apt to come and attack them with knives in the darkness; but protected by this barrier of fire they feel themselves quite safe from their invisible foes.² And in the same tribe

¹ Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897), p. 515.

² H. Candelier, *Rio Hacha et Les Indiens Goajiros* (Paris, 1893), p. 171.

when a man has been buried custom requires that his nearest relatives should keep up a great fire near the grave for nine days after the burial, to protect their deceased kinsman from the ghosts of their dead enemies, who would otherwise come to molest him ; for according to their belief life is not really extinct until nine days after death.¹ In this case it will be observed that the barrier of fire is directed not against the ghost of a dead friend, but against the ghosts of dead enemies, who might come by night to injure him.

In Europe also the barrier of fire against ghosts has not been unknown. In Mecklenburg, if fire and water are thrown after the corpse as it is being carried out the ghost will not afterwards appear in the house.² In ancient Rome, no doubt for a similar purpose, mourners returning from a funeral used to step over fire.³ Some South Slavonians returning from a funeral are met by an old woman carrying a vessel of live coals. On these they pour water, or else take a live coal from the hearth and fling it over their heads.⁴ In Ruthenia the barrier of fire against a ghost is still more attenuated ; mourners merely look steadfastly on the stove or place their hands upon it.⁵

So much for the barriers which primitive man erects to protect himself against the return of the spirit of the dead, but even when he has driven away

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 220.

² Bartschl, *Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Mecklenburg* (Vienna, 1879-1880), ii. p. 96.

³ Festus, *s.v. aqua et igne*.

⁴ W. R. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People* (London, 1872), p. 320.

⁵ W. R. Ralston, *loc. cit.*

these dangerous spirits and placed obstacles in the way of their return, he is still far from feeling easy, he still fears that they may break through the obstacles and return to haunt and torment the living. He is not, however, at the end of his resources, he has still many devices by which he hopes to bar the return of the ghosts, or at all events to render them impotent for mischief. Thus, for instance, failing as usual to distinguish the spiritual from the corporeal, he imagines that by tying up or mutilating and maiming a corpse he simultaneously ties up or mutilates and maims the dead person's ghost in exactly the same manner. To take instances: the Dieri of Central Australia used to tie the great toes and the thumbs of a corpse together to prevent the ghost from walking. The ceremony was witnessed by a constable, who describes it as follows: "Some of the younger men went off to dig a grave, and the elder ones proceeded to tie the great toes of the body together very securely, with strong, stout string, and then tied both the thumbs together behind the back, the body being turned face downwards whilst the latter operation was going on. From the manner in which the strings were tightened and the care taken over that part of the business, one would think that even a strong, healthy living man could not break or rise from such bonds. In reply to me they said that the tying was to prevent him from 'walking'." ¹ Among the natives of the Herbert River in South-

¹ R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* (London, 1878), i. p. 119.

East Australia a near relative of the deceased used to beat the corpse with a mallet so violently as often to break the bones. Incisions were also generally made in the stomach, on the shoulder and in the lungs and filled with stones. The legs were generally broken for the express purpose of preventing the dead man from walking at night. The beating of the body, we are told, was for the sake of so frightening the ghost as to prevent it from haunting the camp, and the stones were put in the body to prevent it going too far afield.¹ Speaking of the natives of Queensland the Swedish traveller Lumholtz says: "The fact that the natives bestow any care on the bodies of the dead is doubtless owing to their fear of the spirits of the departed. In some places I have seen the legs drawn up and tied fast to the bodies, in order to hinder the spirits of the dead, as it were, from getting out to frighten the living. Women and children, whose spirits are not feared, receive less attention and care after death."² And speaking of the Australian aborigines in general another authority observes: "When a man dies, it is a very widely-spread custom for the relations to tie up the limbs of the corpse securely, so as to prevent his coming out of the grave in the shape of a ghost."³ The same writer describes as follows the usual mode of burial among the Australian aborigines: "Shortly after death, the body, in the

¹ A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-Eastern Australia* (London, 1904), p. 474.

² C. Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*

(London, 1889), pp. 277-278.

³ E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race* (Melbourne and London, 1886), i. p. 44.

case of a man, is reduced as nearly as possible to the shape of a ball. To effect this the knees are forced up to the neck and firmly tied to it; the heels are then pressed against the hams, the arms lie flat along the sides, and are secured in each instance in these positions by cords. Some tribes tie the thumbs together; others burn the thumb nails besides. . . . The object sought in tying up the remains of the dead is to prevent the deceased from escaping from the tomb and frightening or injuring the survivors. The more nearly related and more influential in life, the more the deceased is feared.”¹ To take some particular examples, concerning the natives near Newcastle in Western Australia, we are told that, “in burying the dead, besides taking off the finger nails, the thumb and forefinger of each hand are tied tightly together, with the object of preventing the corpse from escaping from the tomb and frightening the survivors. The more nearly an individual is related to the deceased the greater is his fear of the ghost.”² Again, about the natives near Perth in Western Australia it is recorded that: “The limbs of the corpse are securely tied together with bands of rushes or bark, so as, if possible, to hinder it from getting out of the grave and wandering about in the shape of a ghost, of which the Australian Black in all parts is perpetually apprehensive”.³ Again, concerning the Whajook tribe in Western Australia, we read that: “Before interment the hair is cut off

¹ E. M. Curr, *op. cit.* i. p. 87.

Australian Race, i. p. 324.

² G. Whitfield in E. Curr's *The*

³ E. M. Curr, *op. cit.* i. p. 330.

and the nails burnt. This, and the binding of the corpse into the shape of a ball, are to prevent its escape from the grave.”¹ Once more, concerning the natives in the neighbourhood of King George’s Sound we are informed that at burial “the knees of the corpse are doubled up and tied; the forefinger and thumb of the right hand are tied together, the thumb nail is burnt off, to prevent, as they say, the deceased digging his way out and using his spears”.²

It is reported that, in most parts of Central Borneo, when a death has taken place the corpse is brought out from the chamber into the common room of the house and there securely fastened down to the floor by bandages, tightened by pegs, which are passed round the arms and legs, the neck, the chest, and the trunk, constricting the body in such a way that even a strong living man would not be able to get up. The object of this constriction is said to be to prevent the ghost from returning to the body and doing harm to the living.³ Among the Taungthu, a widely spread race of Upper Burma, when a man dies the thumbs and great toes of the corpse are tied together, and this is said by some to be intended to hinder the dead man from walking.⁴ With a similar object we are told the ancient Indians used to put fetters on the feet of their dead, in order to prevent their ghosts from returning to the land of

¹ E. M. Curr, *op. cit.* i. p. 339.

² E. M. Curr, *op. cit.* i. p. 348.

³ Oscar von Kessel, “Über die Volksstämme Borneos”, *Zeitschrift*

für allgemeine Erdkunde, N.F. iii. (1857) pp. 377-410.

⁴ J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, Part I. i. (Rangoon, 1900) p. 554.

the living and molesting the survivors.¹ Among the Chuvash of Russia, when a very ugly man has died, they fasten his corpse down into the grave with iron, lest his ghost should come back to scare living folk by his ungainly appearance.²

And whenever a wicked and quarrelsome man dies they think that his ghost will certainly return to wreak its spite upon the living. In order to obviate this danger they take strong measures to hinder the man, or rather his ghost, from escaping from the coffin; they drive nails through the heart and soles of the feet of the corpse; they nail the coffin securely down, and to make assurance still surer they constrict it with iron hoops.³ Similarly, among the Cheremiss, a neighbouring tribe of Russia, when a bad man dies they drive nails through his heart and the soles of his feet to prevent his ghost from coming back and harming the survivors.⁴ Among the Barundi of Central Africa when a person has died the men tie the limbs of the corpse tightly together on purpose, it is said, to prevent the return of the ghost, which they greatly fear.⁵

In America among the Tupinambas of Brazil the custom at burial is said to have been as follows: "The corpse had all its limbs tied fast, that it might

¹ H. Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben* (Berlin, 1879), p. 402.

² H. Vambéry, *Das Türkenvolk* (Leipzig, 1885), p. 462.

³ A. Erman, "Briefliche Nachrichten über die Tschuwaschen und die Tschereemisen des Gouvernements Kasan", *Archiv für wissen-*

schaftliche Kunde von Russland, i. (1841) p. 376.

⁴ A. F. von Haxthausen, *Studien über die innern Zustände, das Volksleben und insbesondere die ländlichen Einrichtungen Russlands* (Hannover, 1847), i. p. 449m.

⁵ Hans Meyer, *Die Barundi* (Leipzig, 1916), p. 113.

not be able to get up and infest its friends with its visits".¹ A custom curiously different from the foregoing is reported of some of the Eskimo at Bering Strait. The corpse is tied up in a bundle with cord, the head being forced down between the knees, and in this state it is drawn up through the smoke hole in the roof and carried to the graveyard till the coffin is ready for it. Just before the body is placed in the coffin the cords that bind it are cut, in order, they say, that the ghost may return and occupy the body and move about if necessary.² In this case the cords which bind the body are clearly supposed to bind the ghost also, but the custom of untying them before placing the body in the coffin indicates that these Eskimo do not greatly dread a possible return of the ghost to its mortal remains in the grave.

So much for the custom of tying up the corpse in order to prevent the ghost from roving and doing a mischief to the survivors, but for the same purpose primitive man sometimes resorts to still stronger measures. He breaks the bones of the dead body, or otherwise mutilates it in such a fashion as would disable a living man, thinking thus to disable the ghost in a precisely similar manner. We have seen that some of the Australian aborigines break the legs of the dead to hinder their ghosts from walking.

A tribe of the Cameroons in West Africa adopted still more forcible measures for accomplishing the

¹ Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, i. (1817) (London, 1817) p. 258.

² E. W. Nelson, "The Eskimo about Bering Strait", *18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (1896-1897), Part I. (1899) p. 314.

same purpose ; as described by Dr. Nassau, an excellent authority, the custom was as follows. " Of one tribe in the upper course of the Ogowe, I was told, who, in their intense fear of ghosts, and their dread of the possible evil influence of the spirits of their own dead relatives, sometimes adopt a horrible plan for preventing their return. With a very material idea of a spirit, they seek to disable it by beating the corpse until every bone is broken. The mangled mass is hung in a bag at the foot of a tree in the forest. Thus mutilated the spirit is supposed to be unable to return to the village, to entice into its fellowship of death any of the survivors." ¹ Among the Afars, a Danakil tribe on the southern borders of Abyssinia, all the bones of a corpse are broken before it is buried.² The motive for doing so is not mentioned by our authority, but we may conjecture that the object is thereby to render the ghost helpless. Among the Herero or Damara of South-West Africa, the backbone of a corpse is broken immediately after death. " The Herero say that in the spinal cord lives a small worm (maggot) which becomes after death the ghost of the deceased. This can be killed by fracturing the backbone : hence the proceeding here mentioned." ³ Thus it would appear that the Herero adopt the radical expedient of not merely

¹ Rev. R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), p. 234.

² Ph. Paulitsche, *Ethnographie Nordost Afrikas. Die materielle Cultur der Danakil, Galla und Somäl* (Berlin, 1893), p. 205.

³ The Rev. G. Viehe, "Some Customs of the Ovaherero", *South*

African Folk-Lore Journal, i. Part III. (May 1879) p. 55 ; cf. C. J. Anderson, *Lake Ngami* (London, 1856), p. 226 ; P. H. Brincker, "Beobachtungen über die Deisdämonie der Eingeborenen Deutsch-Südwest-Afrikas", *Globus*, lviii. (1890) p. 322.

disabling but killing the ghost. To this practice of killing the ghost we shall return later on.

Among the Kissi on the borders of Liberia the souls of dead witches and wizards are greatly dreaded. And when one of these folk dies the people smash his or her skull with heavy blows of a stone, believing that if this precaution is not adopted the ghost would issue from the grave on the third day after death and returning to the houses would beat the inhabitants and carry off their goods.¹ Of the Indians of the Californian Peninsula in North America we are told that formerly they had broken the spine of the deceased before burying them, and had thrown them into the ditch rolled up like a ball, believing that they would rise up again if not treated in this manner.²

But the breaking of the bones of the corpse is not the only mutilation of the body to which primitive man resorts for the purpose of disabling the ghost. He sometimes maims or mangles the body in other ways at least as radical. Thus with regard to the Kwearriburra tribe of Queensland in Australia we are told "that unless strong preventive measures are taken, the spirits of departed members of the tribe rise from their graves and continually haunt and otherwise annoy those who are still in the flesh. Accordingly, elaborate precautions are adopted, to keep the unfortunate ghosts confined in the grave

¹ H. Néel, "Note sur deux peuplades de la frontière Libérienne, les Kissi et les Toma", *L'Anthropologie*, xxiv. (1913) p. 462.

² *Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Californian Peninsula, etc. Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1864*, p. 387.

which holds their mortal clay. The *modus operandi* is as follows: On the death of a member of the tribe, his or her head is cut off and the trunk placed in a grave in the usual squatting position, and covered up. A fire is then lighted on the top, in which the head is roasted; when it is thoroughly charred it is broken up into little bits amongst the hot coals, and the fire is then left to die gradually out. The theory is that the spirit rising from the grave to follow the tribe misses its head, and goes groping about to find it; but being bereft of its head, it is of course blind, and therefore, not being able to see the fire, gets burnt. This frightens it so terribly that it retires into the grave again with all expedition, and never again presumes to attempt a renewal of social intercourse with the human denizens of this world.”¹ Among the natives of Australia others cut off the thumbs of their dead enemies in order that their ghosts may not be able to throw spears.²

For a similar purpose apparently when the Tupi Indians of Brazil killed and ate a prisoner they cut off his thumb because of its use in archery, but they did not eat it with the rest of the body.³ Other Australian aborigines put hot coals in the ears of a corpse to keep the soul in the body and prevent it from following them till they have got a good start away from him. As a further precaution they bark the

¹ F. C. Urquhart, “Legends of the Australian Aborigines”, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiv. (1885) p. 88. *Ethnological Society of London*, N.S. iii. (1865) p. 287.

² A. Oldfield, “On the Aborigines of Australia”, *Transactions of the* *vol. i. Second Edition (London, 1822), p. 231.*

trees in a circle round the spot, so that when the ghost succeeds in extricating himself from the body and setting off in pursuit of his friends, he may wander round and round in a circle and never overtake them.¹

The Toradjas of Central Celebes believe that men can become werewolves. When a man has been found guilty of this horrible crime they take him to a lonely spot and hack him to pieces, but they fear that if they were bespattered with his blood they would themselves be turned into werewolves. Further, they place the severed head of the werewolf beside his hinder-quarters, with the avowed intention of hindering his soul from coming to life again and pursuing his depredations.²

The Birhors of Bengal believe that the ghost of a woman who dies within a short time of childbirth is very dangerous, and to prevent her ghost from issuing from the grave they prick the soles of her feet with thorns.³ Similarly the Sântals, another primitive people of Bengal, believe that the ghosts of a certain class of women are very dangerous. They are supposed to lick their victims to death, filing off their flesh with their rough tongues. When any of these women die, the survivors slide thorns into the soles of their feet, thus rendering them lame and powerless to pursue their victims.⁴

¹ A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London, 1904), p. 473.

² A. C. Kruijt "De weerwolf bij de Toradja's van Midden-Celebes", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal*,

Land- en Volkenkunde, Deel xli. (1899) p. 559.

³ S. Chandra Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), p. 267.

⁴ Rev. F. T. Cole, "Sântâl Ideas of the Future Life", *Indian Antiquary*, vii. (1878) p. 274.

LECTURE IV



LECTURE IV

IN the last lecture I dealt with some of the devices to which primitive man resorts for preventing the dangerous spirits of the dead from returning to attack the living. I illustrated the barrier of fire which he seeks to interpose between himself and the ghosts. Further I described some of the other very different ways in which he attempts to achieve the same object by tying up or mutilating the corpse, in the belief that by so doing he disables the ghost from doing any harm to the survivors. I propose now to illustrate this custom further by examples drawn from Africa, America and Europe.

In Africa, among the natives of the Gabun district of West Africa, "people who while they were living were supposed to have witch power are believed to be able to rise in altered form from their graves. To prevent one who is thus suspected from making trouble, survivors open the grave, cut off the head, and throw it into the sea,—or in the interior, where there is no great body of water it is burned; then a decoction of the bolondo bark is put into the grave. (The bolondo is a poison; even a little of it may be fatal.)" ¹ Thus these natives appear to

¹ R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), p. 220.

think that if decapitation should fail to disable the ghost poison will have the desired effect. An old writer of the eighteenth century has described these West African practices in more detail. He tells us that when a case of sickness was ascribed to the action of the malignant ghost of a man who had lately died, they used to dig up the body and cut off the head, from which they asserted that blood flowed : this blood they collected and made out of it plasters which they applied to the body of the sick man and mixed with his food, and drink, assuring him of a speedy recovery, since the dead man, having had his head cut off, had no longer strength to come and disturb him. But the case was deemed much more difficult when the man whose spirit was tormenting the patient had not been buried, because he had been killed and eaten by his enemies or by wild beasts. In that case the medicine-man spread nets round the house of the sick man and even into the forest, in order that the soul of the dead man might be caught in the net when he came to annoy the sufferer. When a bird, rat, lizard, ape or other animal was caught in the net it was taken to be the incarnation of the dead man's soul. The medicine-man took it to the sick man and said : " Rejoice ; we've got him ; he shan't escape ". But before he killed the animal he demanded another fee. When this was agreed to he killed the animal, to the sick man's joy. But to prevent the soul returning the animal must be ground to powder and swallowed by the sick man. When the man had swallowed it,

digested it and voided it they thought that he was finally rid of the tormenting ghost.¹ The Mossi of the Western Sudan have a great respect for their chiefs during their life but treat their bodies with something less than respect after their death. As soon as a chief has died they pierce his hands and feet with large thorns to prevent his ghost from returning to catch and carry off one of his relatives, for they think that if he attempted to seize somebody the thorns would hurt him so grievously that he would at once relinquish his intended prey. The corpse is then thrown into a ditch.² The Ba-Ila-speaking people of Northern Rhodesia regard with great contempt any man who dies childless. When such a one dies "they cut off his little finger and little toe, and enclose a piece of charcoal in his fist, before burying him. Their reason for doing this is obscure. They suppose that it will either prevent his being reborn, or if it fails to that extent, at least they will be able to recognize him by the absence of those members should he return to earth."³ Among the Wawanga of the Mount Elgon district in Kenya, when a case of illness is attributed to the action of a malignant ghost, they will sometimes dig up the body of the suspected man and burn the bones over a nest of red ants, and the ashes are swept into a basket and thrown into a river. But sometimes instead of digging up the body the relatives of the

¹ J. B. Labat, *Relation historique de l'Éthiopie Occidentale* (Paris, 1732), ii. pp. 209-212.

² P. E. Mangin, "Les Mossi",

Anthropos, ix. (1914) p. 732.

³ E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, ii. (London, 1920) p. 1.

sick man drive a stake into the head of the grave, and, to make assurance doubly sure, pour boiling water down after it.¹ This is no doubt thought to give a final quietus to the ghost who is causing the illness. Among the Ovambo of South-West Africa, the souls of dead magicians are especially dreaded. Hence, when a magician dies it is customary to dismember the body and to cut the tongue out of the mouth. They think that if these precautions are adopted the soul of the dead man cannot become a dangerous ghost; the mutilation of the body has practically disarmed his spirit.²

The custom of decapitating a corpse in order to disable the dangerous ghost which we have seen practised in Australia and Africa, is observed also by the Armenians. They not only cut off the head but smash it or stick a needle into it or into the dead man's heart.³

In America, among the Eskimo about Bering Strait, when a man of evil reputation died they used to cut the sinews of his arms and legs to prevent his ghost from returning to the body and causing it to walk about at night as a ghoul.⁴ The Rev. J. Owen Dorsey, our highest authority on the Omahas, was told by these Indians that "when a man was killed by lightning, he ought to be buried face downwards and the soles of his feet had to be slit. When this

¹ Hon. K. R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and Other Tribes of the Elgon District of British East Africa", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 38.

² Herman Tönjes, *Ovamboland, Land, Leute, Mission* (Berlin, 1911),

pp. 193-197.

³ M. Abeghian, *Der armenische Volksglaube* (Leipsic, 1899), p. 11.

⁴ E. W. Nelson, "The Eskimo about Bering Strait", *18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1896-97 (1899), p. 423.

was done, the spirit went at once to the spirit land, without giving further trouble to the living. In one case (that of a Wejinecte man, Jadegi, according to George Miller and Frank La Fléche) this was not done, so it was said that the ghost *walked*, and he did not rest in peace till another person (his brother) was slain by lightning and laid beside him.”¹

The Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco inflict on the bodies of the dead or dying certain strange mutilations, the exact object of which is not clear, though some of them appear certainly to be directed not so much against the ghost of the deceased as against the sorcerer who is suspected of having caused the death. These mutilations are described as follows by the Rev. W. Grubb, our best authority on these Indians. “In some cases the only peculiar rite is the placing of hot embers beneath the feet of the corpse and on the head. If, however, the seat of trouble has been in the head, after the body has been placed in the grave they batter the skull with clubs; if in the region of the heart, arrows are shot into it, and sometimes a stake is driven through the shoulder and slanting out below the ribs, thus pinning the body to the side of the grave. In the case of dropsy, the body is shot at, and a bunch of herbs is held by the man conducting the burial. This is afterwards burnt, and each of the party swallows some of the smoke. The meaning of these and many more rites which are

¹ J. O. Dorsey, “A Study of *of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1889-90 (1894), p. 420.
Siouan Cults”, *11th Annual Report*

used I do not fully understand, and I have had opportunities of witnessing only some of them. A very common rite, however, is the cutting open of the side, and the insertion into the wound thus made of heated stones, an armadillo's claw, some dog's bones, and occasionally red ants. The wound is then closed. In cases where haste is necessary, as it always is if the funeral takes place towards sunset, the sick person is not always dead when this operation is performed. In any case, to be efficacious, it must be performed, if not before actual death, certainly immediately afterwards, and before the spirit is supposed to have left the vicinity of the body. The stones are thought to have knowledge communicated by the soul of the dying or dead person, who, being freed from the limitations of the body, is able to recognize more clearly the originator of the trouble. They are supposed to ascend to the Milky Way, and there remain until they find an opportunity to descend on the author of the evil in the form of shooting stars. Consequently the Indians are very frightened when they see a falling star. They have all been guilty in their time, or are supposed to have been guilty, of causing some evil to others, and they are never sure when vengeance in this form may be wreaked on them from some distant quarter."¹

On these mutilations it may be observed that they are clearly intended to effect the soul of the dead or

¹ W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1911), pp. 162, 163.

dying man since they must be inflicted on his body before the soul has quitted it. Apparently they are intended to enable the ghost to avenge himself upon the supposed author of his death rather than to prevent him from injuring other people. So far therefore they differ from most of the other mutilations which we have passed in review, but in them as in the other preceding cases is involved the fundamental fallacy of imagining that you can influence a disembodied spirit by inflicting certain injuries on its mortal remains. It is the old, the ever recurring confusion of body and spirit.

In civilized Europe itself the custom of mangling a dead body for the purpose of maiming and disabling the dangerous ghost of the deceased has not been unknown. Ancient Greek murderers used to cut off the extremities, such as the ears and noses, of their victims, fasten them on a string, and tie the string round the necks and under the armpits of the murdered man. One motive assigned for this custom, and probably the original one, was the wish to weaken him so that he, or rather his ghost, could not take vengeance on his murderer. According to one account (a Scholiast on Sophocles, *Electra*, 445) the murderer fastened the extremities of his victim about his own person, but the better attested and more probable account is that he tied them about the mutilated body of his victim.¹ The practice is

¹ Scholiast on Sophocles, *Electra*, 445; Suidas, *s.v.* *μασχαλισθῆναι*. Hesychius and Photius, *Lexicon*, *s.v.* *μασχαλισματα*; Scholiast on Apol-

lonius Rhodius, *Argon.* iv. 477; cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche*, i. 322-326. R. C. Jebb, on Sophocles, *Electra*, 445, with the Appendix, pp. 211 *sqq.*

perhaps illustrated by an original drawing in the Ambrosian manuscript of the *Iliad*, which represents the Homeric episode of Dolon;¹ in the drawing the corpse of the slain Dolon is depicted shorn of its feet and hands, which lie beside it, while Ulysses holds Dolon's severed head in his hand.²

" 'The greatest marvel that I know', says Walter Map, concerned a Welsh malefactor and unbeliever. He died in the house of William Laudun, a brave soldier, who told the Bishop of Hereford how the Welshman returned night by night, and summoned his fellow-lodgers by name, when they became ill and died, in three days. Now only a few survived. The Bishop thought that God might have given permission to the evil angel of the man to make his dead body restless. He advised Laudun to dig up the corpse, cut the neck, sprinkle the body and grave with holy water, and rebury it. In spite of this being done, the survivors were still assailed, and finally Laudun himself was summoned. He drew his sword and pursued the malefactor to the grave and clave its head to the neck. The trouble now ceased, and Laudun did not die as a result of the summons.'"³

The medieval Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus has recorded how, when a pestilence was raging, the misfortune was attributed to the angry

¹ *Iliad*, x. 314.

² *Annali dell' Instituto di Correspondenza Archeologica* (Rome, 1875), tav. d' agg. R.; A. Baumeister, *Denkmäler des klassischen Alter-*

tums, i. 460 sq., Fig. 506.

³ J. A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable* (London, 1932), p. 90, referring to Walter Map, ii. 27.

ghost of a man who had been killed in a popular tumult shortly before. To remedy the evil they dug up his body, cut off the head and ran a sharp stake through the breast of the corpse. The remedy proved effectual, for the plague ceased.¹ In 1710 when a great pestilence was raging in East Prussia the authorities gave orders that the graves should be opened and the bodies dug up in order to detect the malefactor whose ghost was causing the mischief. Suspicion at last fell upon one, who seems to have inflicted some wounds upon himself, so the corpse was decapitated and the headless body thrown back into the grave with a live dog to keep it company. But strange to say, even after these strong measures had been taken, the plague still continued.²

In Eastern Europe from Prussia on the north to Macedonia and Greece on the south, the belief in vampires has been and still is rampant. Vampires are malicious ghosts who issue from their graves to suck the blood of the living, and stringent measures are deemed necessary to hinder or arrest this horrible proceeding. In East Prussia when a person is believed to be suffering from the attacks of a vampire and suspicion falls on the ghost of somebody who died lately, the only remedy is thought to be for the family of the deceased to go to his grave, dig up his body, behead it and place the head between the legs of the corpse. If blood flows from the severed head the man was certainly a vampire,

¹ Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia Danica*, lib. I. ed. P. E. Müller (Havniae, 1836), i. p. 43. ² M. Toeppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren* (Danzig, 1867), p. 114.

and the family must drink of the flowing blood, thus recovering the blood which had been sucked from their living bodies by the vampire.¹ Thus the vampire is paid out in kind.

In Serbia and Bulgaria, to prevent a man from becoming a vampire they stick a whitethorn into the navel of his corpse, and burn off all the hair on his body except on the head. Further, they slit the soles of his feet and drive a nail into the back of his head to prevent the skin from being blown up by the devil.² These measures are preventive, but to put an end to a vampire his corpse is staked and burned. The stake with which his body is pierced should be of hawthorn. If a butterfly escapes from the grave while the corpse is being stabbed the people run after it, catch it and throw it on a fire. That is the end of the vampire. But if the butterfly escape, woe to the village, for the vampire will avenge himself on the inhabitants till his seven years are up. Some say the vampire should be stabbed with a knife that has never been used to cut bread. Some say the stab should be given through the dried hide of a young bull, for they believe that whoever is sprinkled with the blood of a vampire will himself become a vampire and will soon die. In the Drina district of Bosnia, on the borders of Bosnia, the priest goes at the head of the peasantry to the graveyard; they open the grave,

¹ W. J. U. Tettau und J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen Ostpreussens, Litauens und Westpreussens* (Berlin, 1835), p. 275.

² F. S. Krauss, "Vampyre in südslawischen Volksglauben", *Globus*, lxi. (1892) p. 326.

fill it with straw ; stab the corpse through the straw with a stake of hawthorn, and set fire to the straw. The fire is kept up till the vampire is reduced to ashes. That prevents his return to plague people.¹ In Wallachia to prevent a man from becoming a vampire they run a long nail through the skull of the corpse, and lay a thorny rose bush on his body, in the hope that should he struggle to emerge from the grave the thorns will so entangle him in his shroud that he will not be able to extricate himself from it and so will remain quietly in the grave.² Among the Roumanians of Transylvania the custom and belief concerning vampires are similar. They think that there are two sorts of vampires, either living or dead. The living vampire is generally the illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate persons ; but even a flawless pedigree will not ensure any one against the intrusion of a vampire into the family vault, since every one killed by a vampire becomes likewise a vampire after death, and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent persons until the ghost has been exorcised by opening the grave and either driving a stake through the corpse or else firing a pistol shot into the coffin. To walk smoking round the grave on each anniversary of the death, is also supposed to be effective in confining the vampire ; this is clearly a mild form of the barrier by fire. In very obstinate cases of vampirism it is recommended to cut off the head and replace it in

¹ F. S. Krauss, " Südslavische Schutzmittel gegen Vampyre ", *Globus*, lxii. (1892) p. 203 sq.

² Arthur und Albert Schott, *Wallachische Mährchen* (Stuttgart, 1845), p. 298.

the coffin with the mouth filled with garlic; or to extract the heart and burn it, strewing the ashes over the grave. Every Roumanian village has some old woman versed in the modes of laying vampires. Sometimes she drives a nail through the forehead of the deceased, or she rubs the body with the fat of a pig which has been killed on the Feast of Ignatius, five days before Christmas. It is also very usual to place the thorny branch of a wild-rose bush across the body to prevent it leaving the coffin.¹

The belief in the blood-sucking ghost which we call vampires is also widely spread amongst the modern Greeks, who may possibly have borrowed it from their northern neighbours the Slavs. To put an end to the depredations of a vampire they dig up the body of the suspected person, cut out the heart and burn it over the corpse, or as an alternative they burn it with the whole body.² "The accordance between the Greek and Slavonic conceptions of the vampire", says Mr. G. F. Abbott, "is nowhere more apparent than in Macedonia, a province which for many centuries past has been the meeting-point of Slav and Hellene. It is believed that a dead person turns into a vampire (*βρυκολακιάζει*), first, if at the unearthing of the body the latter is found undecayed and turned face downwards. In such an emergency the relatives of the deceased have recourse to a ceremony which fills the beholder with sickening horror. I was credibly informed of a

¹ E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest* (Edinburgh and London, 1888), i. p. 13. ² B. Schmidt, *Das Volksleben der Neugriechen* (Leipzig, 1871), p. 167.

case of this description occurring not long ago at Alistrati, one of the principal villages between Serres and Drama. Someone was suspected of having turned into a vampire. The corpse was taken out of the grave, scalded with boiling oil, and was pierced through the navel with a long nail. Then the tomb was covered in, and millet was scattered over it, that, if the vampire came out again, he might waste his time in picking up the grains of millet and be thus overtaken by dawn. For the usual period of their wanderings is from about two hours before midnight till the first crowing of the morning cock.”¹

In some of the foregoing cases the treatment of the body of a vampire appears to be intended not merely to disable but to destroy the blood-sucking ghost. There is other evidence pointing to the conclusion that primitive man has clearly conceived the possibility of actually killing a dangerous ghost and so putting an end to it once and for all. From his point of view this mode of dealing with the spirit is clearly the most satisfactory of all; for the ghost once dead can give no more trouble.

To take examples, the Mori-oris, the inhabitants of the Chatham Islands off New Zealand, believed that “after death, the spirit of the departed had power to return to earth and haunt the living, and that a person visited by the *kiko-kiko* (or evil spirit of the dead), and touched on the head by it, would die very soon after such visitation. To prevent the

¹ G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 218, 219.

dead from troubling them, they had a curious custom. As soon as breath had left the body, they would all assemble at midnight in some secluded spot, and proceed to kill the *kiko-kiko*. First, kindling a large fire, they would sit round in a circle, each person holding a long rod in his hand ; to the end of each rod a tuft of spear grass was tied ; they would then sway their bodies to and fro, waving the rods over the fire in every direction, jabbering strange and unintelligible incantations." By this means they appear to have imagined that they killed the dangerous ghost.¹

In the island of Mangaia, in the Central Pacific, the ceremony of killing the ghosts used to be carried out with great pomp in a series of mock battles which have been described as follows by a missionary long resident in the island. The ceremony, he tells us, was called *Ta i te mauri*, or Ghost-Killing. " Upon the decease of an individual, a messenger (' bird ' , so called from his swiftness) was sent round the island. Upon reaching the boundary line of each district, he paused to give the war-shout peculiar to these people, adding ' So-and-so is dead ' . Near relatives would start off at once for the house of the deceased, each carrying a present of native cloth. Most of the athletic young men of the entire island on the day following united in a series of mimic battles designated ' *ta i te mauri* ' , or slaying the ghosts. The district where the corpse lay represented the ' mauri ' "

¹ W. T. L. Travers, " Notes of the Traditions and Manners and Customs of the Mori-oris ", *Trans- actions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, ix. (1876) p. 26.

or ghosts. The young men belonging to it early in the morning arrayed themselves as if for battle, and well armed, started off for the adjoining district, where the young men were drawn up in battle array under the name of 'aka-oa', or friends. The war-dance performed, the two parties rush together, clashing their spears and wooden swords together in right earnest. The sufferers in this bloodless conflict were supposed to be malignant spirits, who would thus be deterred from doing further mischief to mortals. The combatants now coalesce, and are collectively called 'mauri', or ghosts, and pass on to the third district. Throughout the day their leader carries the sacred 'iku kikau', or cocoa-nut leaf, at the pit of his stomach like the dead. Arrived at this third village, they find the young men ready for the friendly conflict, and bearing the name of 'aka-oa'. 'The battle of the ghosts' is again fought, and now with swelling numbers they pass on to the fourth, fifth and sixth districts. In every case it was supposed that the ghosts were well thrashed. Returning with a really imposing force to the place where the corpse was laid out in state, a feast was given to the brave ghost-killers, and all save near relatives return to their various homes ere nightfall. So similar was this to actual warfare, that it was appropriately named 'e teina no te puruki', i.e. 'a younger brother of war'.¹

In Fiji it was believed to be possible to kill a

¹ W. W. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (London, 1876), pp. 268, 269.

troublesome ghost. Once it happened that many chiefs feasted in the house of Tanoa, King of Ambau. In the course of the evening one of them related how he had slain a neighbouring chief. That very night, having occasion to leave the house, he saw, as he believed, the ghost of his victim, hurled his club at him, and killed him stone dead. On his return to the house he roused the king and the rest of the inmates from their slumbers and recounted his exploit. The matter was deemed of high importance, and they all sat on it in solemn conclave. Next morning a search was made for the club on the scene of the murder; it was found and carried with great pomp and parade to the nearest temple, where it was laid up for a perpetual memorial. Everybody was firmly persuaded that by this swashing blow the ghost had been not only killed but annihilated.¹

In Africa, as we have seen, the Herero believe that they can kill a person's ghost by breaking his backbone after death.² The Bura and Pabir tribes of Northern Nigeria regard with great fear the ghost of a man who has been killed by lightning and they think that they can kill it. The ceremony of killing it must be performed by the members of a certain clan, the Lasama. Seven days after the burial the men of the clan assemble at the dead man's haunts and there dance and toss up in the air a goat which, as it falls, is caught on the sacred staves. Suddenly one of the men espies the wicked soul, and catching it

¹ Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*,

New Edition (New York, 1851), iii. 85.

² See above, p. 69.

wraps it in grass and deposits it in the dead man's grave. A fee is paid to the men of the clan for rendering this dangerous service by destroying the dangerous ghost.¹ Among the Banyankole of Uganda sickness was sometimes attributed to the action of a malignant ghost. In order to drive out the obsessing ghost who had taken possession of the sufferer's body, a medicine-man made 'scratches' on the patient's body and rubbed some pungent powder into them, till the patient writhed with pain. Smarting from the pain the ghost was now ready to quit the sufferer, and to hasten his departure the medicine-man rubbed the sick man's body down with his hands, pressing the ghost from his head out at his feet and the tips of his fingers. When the ghost sought to escape it was caught in a pot which was placed ready to receive it, and the pot was thrown either into fire or into water, thus either burning or drowning the ghost. In either case there was an end of the ghost.² Similarly among the Banyoro of Uganda, when a case of sickness was ascribed to the influence of a ghost who had taken possession of a patient's body, a medicine-man used to lure the ghost out of the body of the sufferer into a pot which he had baited with savoury meat. When the ghost thus tempted entered into the pot, the medicine-man shut it up and carried it to waste land, where he either burned it or threw it into running water, thus

¹ C. K. Meek, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1931), i. p. 169.

² J. Roscoe, *The Banyankole* (Cambridge, 1923), p. 141; compare J. G. Frazer, *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion* (London, 1933), pp. 157-158.

burning or drowning the ghost.¹ Again, amongst the Baganda the "evil-disposed ghost which attacks people of its own accord, uninfluenced by some living person, is usually thought to be the ghost of the aunt on the male side. These ghosts are sometimes most troublesome, causing the man's wife or his children constant sickness, and nothing will appease them. In such a case the *Mandwa* (priest) has to capture the ghost and destroy it; he comes to the house bringing either a cow or buffalo horn into which he puts a cowrie or snail shell with a seed of the wild plantain; this he places on the end of a long stick and passes up the central post of the hut until he reaches the top near the roof. The spirits always take up their abode in the highest part of the conical-shaped huts on the central pole. During the process of capturing the spirit the house is kept in darkness and only two or three people are permitted to be present. When the *Mandwa* (priest) has got the horn to the top of the pole he works it about until the shells and seed make a squeaking noise; this he pronounces to be the voice of the ghost which has entered the horn; he then rapidly lowers the horn, covers it with a bit of bark cloth and plunges it into a pot of water; the ghost thus secured is carried off in triumph to the nearest river and plunged into it; if there is no river near the priest secures the mouth of the pot, and carries it off into a place where there is some unreclaimed land where he deposits it, and

¹ J. Roscoe, *The Bakitara or of the Dead in Primitive Religion, Banyoro* (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 286 pp. 159-161.
sq.; compare J. G. Frazer, *The Fear*

leaves it to be destroyed by the next grass fire.”¹ Thus if the ghost escapes death by drowning he is sure to perish in the end by fire. Among the Bavenda of the Northern Transvaal a diviner will sometimes declare that the death of a member of a tribe has been caused by the wicked ghost of an ancestral spirit who must therefore be destroyed in order to protect his descendants against his further attacks. In order to effect this destruction the spear of the wicked spirit is tied round the neck of a black goat ; a heavy stone is attached to it, and the goat with the spear and the stone is thrown into a deep pool. With the goat the ancestral spirit is believed to be thrown into the water and drowned, thus ridding his descendants of any danger from him for ever.² Speaking of West African negroes in general, Miss Mary Kingsley observes : “ Destroying the body by breaking up or cutting up is a widely diffused custom in West Africa in the case of dangerous souls, and is universally followed with those that have contained wanderer-souls, *i.e.* those souls which keep on turning up in the successive infants of a family. A child dies, then another child comes to the same father or mother and that dies, after giving the usual trouble and expense. A third arrives, and if that dies, the worm—I mean the father—turns, and if he is still desirous of more children he just breaks one of the legs of the body before throwing it in the bush. This

¹ J. Roscoe, “ Further Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Baganda”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 43.

² H. A. Stayt, *The Bavenda* (Oxford, 1931), p. 252.

he thinks will act as a warning to the wanderer-soul and give it to understand that if it will persist in coming into his family, it must settle down there and give up its flighty ways. If a fourth child arrives in the family, and if it dies, the justly irritated parent cuts its body up carefully into very small pieces, and scatters them, doing away with the soul altogether.”¹ Thus the total destruction of a child’s body is believed to involve the total destruction of its soul.

¹ Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897), p. 480.

LECTURE V



LECTURE V

IN the last lecture I dealt with some of the means which primitive man employs to prevent the spirits of the dead from coming back to trouble and plague the living. In particular I described some of the mutilations which he inflicts on a corpse in the belief that he thereby maims and disables the ghost in like manner. Later, I showed that going still further he imagines that he can not only disable the ghost but kill it and annihilate it. But apart from these strong measures he resorts to a great variety of less severe devices to effect the same object. I propose now to illustrate some of these devices by a series of miscellaneous examples. They display on the part of primitive man an ingenuity and resourcefulness which might, perhaps, have been turned to better account in a better cause; at least they serve to set in a strong light that obsessing fear of the spirits of the dead which has played an enormous part in the history of humanity.

Thus, for example, among the natives of Halma-hera or Gilolo, a large island to the west of New Guinea, when any one dies, the members of his

household must change their names ; else the dead man knows their names and calls them, to keep him company in the grave ; so that they die. When any one dies and his eyes remain wide open, they say that he is looking round for a companion ; hence, some one else will die soon. So they are always careful to weight the eyelids of a corpse, generally with a rijksdollar, in order to keep them shut. When a corpse is buried, the stem of a banana-tree must be buried with it to keep it company, in order that the dead person may not seek a companion among the living. Hence, when the coffin is lowered into the ground, one of the bystanders steps up and throws a young banana-tree into the grave saying : “ Friend, you must miss your companions of this earth ; here, take this as a comrade ”. When any one dies and his coffin is made, they must take the measure of the corpse and make the coffin fit it exactly ; otherwise, they say (if there is room and to spare in the coffin) some one else will soon die. For the same reason the grave must fit the coffin exactly. A grave must not be dug in a place all by itself, else the dead person buried in it will seek to have a companion. (Graves are dug behind the house, and generally there are old graves there already.) When a mother has a child that dies young she must wear the *slendang*, or cloth in which the child is carried, continually for more than a month ; otherwise she will have another loss. When a man who was a werewolf dies, it is necessary to strew lime on his eyes and to cover his head with a

pan ; for then, they say, his eyes are dim and he cannot see to come and visit the survivors with sickness or death. When some woman dies and they say that she was a *pontianak* (evil spirit), they stick needles under all her nails, and under her armpits they place two hen's eggs : this, they say, is a plaything for her child and therefore she will not spread out her arms to fly about else she would lose the eggs ; and the reason for sticking needles under her nails is that she may not go about as a *pontianak*, for her nails will be sore and thus she will not be able to seize with them.¹

In the Island of Nias, to the west of Sumatra, at a burial "when they have come to the grave, whither they have proceeded with loud lamentations, the nearest relatives, and not least the women, behave as if they were frantic. When the coffin is lowered into the grave, they make as if they would leap into the grave, stab themselves, and so forth, customs which have their ground in the fear of the ghost of the deceased ; for by so doing they make it clear to him that his death is mourned, in order that his spirit may not, out of revenge, bring misfortune on the surviving relatives. For these reasons, before they go to the grave, the dead man's golden ornaments are shown to him in order that he may take the shadow of them with him to the land of souls ; and from the same consideration some gold is placed

¹ M. J. van Baarda, "Fabelen, Verhalen en Overleveringen der Gabelareezen", collected by H. van Dijken, published and translated by

M. J. van Baarda, *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, xlv. (1895) pp. 538-541.

in the mouth of the corpse.¹ In South Nias the corpse is coffined outside of the village, in order that the spirit of the dead may not find the way back to the village to fetch somebody there. For this reason there is, also in North Nias, no regular path to the cemeteries, but on each occasion of a burial a path is cleared to the cemetery.² Clearly these people count upon the inability of the ghost to find his way back to the house by a new and unfamiliar path through the forest.

Among the Papuans of Geelvink Bay in Dutch New Guinea, it is a rule that while a burial is proceeding no noise may be made and no work done in the village, for any noise would excite the anger of the ghost, and he would take his revenge on the survivors who show so little regard for his feelings. And after the burial is completed they fasten leaves and branches to the houses and trees as scarecrows to frighten away the ghost, if he should venture to return.³ The Kiwai of British New Guinea always carry a dead body to the grave head foremost, because they believe that if they carried it in the reverse position the ghost would return to the village.⁴ A contrary rule was observed in the neighbouring island of Mabuiag to the south of New Guinea, for there the corpse was always carried out to burial feet foremost, else it was believed that the ghost would

¹ Th. C. Rappard, "Het eiland Nias en zijne bewoners", *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, lxii. (1909) p. 571.

² Th. C. Rappard, *op. cit.* p. 573.

³ J. B. van Hasselt, "Die Noeforezen", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, viii. (1876) pp. 188-189.

⁴ G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea* (London, 1927), p. 257.

return and trouble the survivors. As a further precaution to prevent his wandering the thumbs and great toes of the corpse were tied together.¹ The same rule of carrying out a corpse feet foremost to prevent the return of the ghost has been observed by other peoples, as we shall see presently. In the Society Islands of the Pacific, after an elaborate ceremony for the burial of the sins of the deceased, a priest used to step up to the side of the corpse, and taking some small slips of plantain leaf-stalk he fixed two or three of them under each arm, placed a few on the breast, and then, addressing the dead body, said: "There are your family, there is your child, there is your wife, there is your father, and there is your mother. Be satisfied yonder (that is, in the world of spirits). Look not towards those who are left in this world." This concluding ceremony was designed to impart contentment to the deceased, and to prevent his spirit from repairing to the places of his former resort, and so distressing the survivors.² Among the Subanos of Mindanao, when men return home after a burial they thrust their chopping knives deeply into the rungs of the house ladder, doubtless to prevent the ghost from returning and climbing up the ladder into the house.³

¹ A. C. Haddon, "Funeral Ceremonies", *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits*, v. (Cambridge, 1904) p. 248; *id.*, "The Secular and Ceremonial Dances of Torres Straits", *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, vi. (1893) p. 152.

² W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*

(London, 1836), Second Edition, i. pp. 401-403.

³ F. Blumentritt, "Neue Nachrichten über die Subanon (Insel Mindanao) (nach P. Francisco Sanchez)", *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, xxxi. (1896) p. 371.

The dwarf tribes of the Malay Peninsula, the Semang, the Orang Utan and the Kenta, shift their camp immediately after a death, often removing to a great distance, because they fear that the ghost might attack and kill them. They are careful to place a river between them and the old camp, believing apparently that the ghost cannot cross water.¹ This is obviously a case of the water barrier with which we are already familiar.

In Siam a corpse is sometimes placed in the coffin face downwards, in order that the ghost may not find its way back to the house; and for the purpose of rendering his return to the old home still more difficult, the coffin is carried out of the house not by the door but through an opening specially made in the wall. As if this were not enough to baffle the ghost the coffin is carried by the bearers at a run several times round the house, till the ghost may be presumed to be giddy and quite unable to retrace his steps to the familiar dwelling.² A similar mode of baffling the ghost and preventing his return to the house is practised by the Shans of Burma. They greatly dread the ghost of a woman who has died in child-bed and take great pains to prevent it from returning, in the form of a malignant spirit, to attack her husband and torment him. Hence, when the bodies of the dead mother and child are being removed from the house part of the

¹ Paul Schebesta, *Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya* (London, n.d.), pp. 106, 143, 236.

Yellow Robe (Westminster, 1898), p. 246; Mgr. Pallegoix, *Description du royaume Thai ou Siam* (Paris, 1854), p. 245.

² E. Young, *The Kingdom of the*

mat wall in the side of the house is taken down, and the dead woman and her baby are lowered to the ground through the aperture. The hole through which the bodies have passed is immediately filled with new mats, so that the ghost may not know how to return.¹ The Palaungs, another tribe of Burma, entertain a similar dread of the ghost of the woman dying in childbirth and adopt a similar precaution to prevent her spirit from returning. The body is lowered through a hole in the floor of the room in which she died, then the floor is washed and the hole is closed with new boards. This, they hope, will prevent the return of the spirits of the unfortunate mother and child, to Palaungs, the most terrifying of unhappy spirits.² This mode of preventing a ghost from returning to the house by carrying out his corpse through a special opening which is afterwards immediately closed, is by no means peculiar to Burma and Siam; it has been practised by many other peoples in many other parts of the world. Elsewhere I have collected the evidence for its diffusion, but I cannot linger over it now.³ Among the Kakhyen of Upper Burma, mourners returning from the grave strew ground rice along the path and cleanse their legs and arms with fresh leaves. Before re-entering the house they are purified with water by the medicine-man with a sprinkler of grass,

¹ Mrs. Leslie Milne, *Shans at Home* (London, 1910), p. 96.

pp. 304, 305.
² J. G. Frazer, *Garnered Sheaves*

³ Mrs. Leslie Milne, *The Home of an Eastern Clan* (Oxford, 1924),

(London, 1931), p. 10 *sqq.*; J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality* (London, 1913), i. pp. 452 *sqq.*

and step over a bundle of grass sprinkled with the blood of a fowl sacrificed during their absence to the spirit of the dead. A few days later the ghost of the deceased, who is supposed to be still lingering about his old home, is finally expelled from the house by a great dance.¹

Among the tribes in the Aracan Mountains in Burma, if a woman who has had children gives birth to a still-born infant a piece of iron is placed in the cradle-coffin, a relation saying: "Return not into the womb of thy mother until this iron is soft as cotton".²

Among the Karens of Burma, when a funeral party is returning from the grave, "each person provides himself with little hooks made of branches of trees, and calling his spirit to follow him, at short intervals, as he returns, he makes a motion as if hooking it, and then thrusts the hook into the ground. This is done to prevent the spirit of the living from staying behind with the spirit of the dead."³

In Chittagong, a district of North-Eastern India, when a funeral is taking place a man follows the body, pouring out water behind it all the way from the house to the boundaries; this is clearly another case of the water barrier. Formerly, when the corpse had been carried out of the house, they used to drive a nail into the threshold to prevent the ghost from returning and entering the dwelling.⁴

¹ J. A. Anderson, *Mandalay to Momiën* (London, 1876), p. 144; cf. p. 77.

² *The British Burma Gazetteer*, i. (Rangoon, 1879-1880) p. 387.

³ F. Mason, "Physical Char-

acters, etc., of the Karens", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part II. No. 1 (1866), p. 28.

⁴ Th. Bérangier, "Les funérailles à Chittagong", *Les Missions Catholiques*, xiii. (1881) pp. 503, 504.

Primitive man fears the spirits of the dead not only while he is awake but while he is asleep, for in sleep he may dream of a ghost, and to his thinking a dream is as real as a waking reality. Hence he deems it very dangerous to dream of the ghost of a dead man on the night after his burial; for he fancies that the ghost has come in person to disturb him and perhaps to carry off another soul from the house. To avoid these dangers the Lakhers of Assam take elaborate precautions. After a burial when the dead man's relations return home and are about to enter the house, they step on to a sieve containing a little rice, which has been placed ready for the purpose, and go on into the house. This is to show that the soul of the dead has gone to *Athikhi*, the spirit-land, and that his relations are again clean, rice being an emblem of purity. That evening the mother's brother's wife brings a fowl and some *sahmahei* (fermented rice), and sacrifices the fowl to console the souls of the surviving members of the deceased's family, and anoints the big toe of each with the fowl's blood; she then gives each of them a little fermented rice and returns home. This is an important sacrifice, for it is essential that the souls of the deceased's family should be at peace; because if any member of it sees any one in his dreams on the night of the funeral, the person dreamed of will soon die also. The belief is that on the night of the funeral the spirit of the deceased comes to visit his family, and if they are dreaming of any one, the deceased's spirit meets the spirit of the person

dreamed of and seizes it and carries it off with him to *Athikhi*. On the morning after the funeral one of the neighbours always asks the deceased's relatives whether they had any dreams during the night or not; if the answer is "No", all is well, but if one of the family dreamt of any one that night he must say so, as it is very unlucky for the person dreamed of. If the dream was that the dead man appeared again alive in the house, it means that another member of the family will die. A further precaution is often taken to prevent the deceased's relations or other villagers from dreaming on the night of the funeral. Each householder, before going to sleep, puts a little cooked rice in a pot, and each member of the household says, "May my spirit not wander about to-night, let it remain within this pot"; having said this, each person puts his hand inside the pot and touches the rice. By this means the spirits are kept imprisoned inside the pots, and as they cannot wander about and meet other people's spirits, the owners of the imprisoned spirits do not dream of any one that night, and so cause no one any harm. Another way of preventing the soul from escaping from its owner's house is to place a paddy pestle across the door, as the soul will fear to go under it, lest the pestle should fall on it.¹ We have already seen that these people sometimes place a paddy pestle at the door of a house to prevent the ghost from entering; we now see that they also place a paddy pestle at the door to prevent their

¹ N. E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (London, 1932), pp. 402, 403.

own souls from going out. Clearly the pestle is regarded as an effectual barrier against the passage of a spirit in either direction.

Among the Kawar, a primitive tribe of the Central Provinces in India, after the funeral the mourners bathe and return home walking one behind the other in Indian file. When they come to a cross-road the foremost man picks up a pebble with his left foot, and it is passed from hand to hand down the line of men until the hindmost throws it away. This is thought to sever their connexion with the spirit of the deceased and prevent it from following them home.¹ Among the Korku, a Munda people of the Central Provinces of India, "in order to lay to rest the spirit of a dead person, who it is feared may trouble the living, five pieces of bamboo are taken as representing the bones of the dead man, and these with five crab's legs, five grains of rice and other articles, are put into a basket and thrust into a crab's hole under water. The occasion is made an excuse for much feasting and drinking, and the son or other representative who lays the spirit works himself up into a state of drunken excitement before he enters the water to search for a suitable hole."² Among the Pabia, a small caste in the Bilaspur District of India, "when any one dies in a family, all the members, as soon as the breath leaves his body, go into another room of the house; and across the door they lay a net opened into the room

¹ R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iii. p. 397.

² R. V. Russell, *op. cit.* iii. p. 564.

where the corpse lies. They think that the spirit of the dead man will follow them, and will be caught in the net. Then the net is carried away and burnt or buried with the corpse, and thus they think that the spirit is removed and prevented from remaining about the house and troubling the survivors.”¹ In the Punjab the ghosts of sweepers are thought to be malevolent and are much dreaded ; and their bodies are therefore always buried or burnt face downwards to prevent their spirits from escaping. Riots have taken place, and the magistrates have been appealed to, in order to prevent a sweeper being buried face upwards.²

The Koryak, a primitive people in the extreme north-eastern corner of Asia, appear to regard the spirits of the dead as hostile to the living from the moment that their bodies have been removed from the house. They burn their dead. At the cremation of the body of a girl, her grandfather “took a pole and thrusting it into the body said, ‘Of yonder magpie pricked’ . . . or, in a free translation, ‘This is the magpie of the underworld which pricked’. He imitated the actions of the magpie of the world of the dead, in order to inform the deceased that she was passing to another world, and must not return to the house. The further actions of the dead girl’s grandfather had the same end in view. When the flames of the pyre were dying away, he broke

¹ R. V. Russell, *op. cit.* i. p. 395.

² R. V. Russell, *op. cit.* iv. p. 221 ; W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folk-Lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. p. 269, referring to Ibbetson, *Punjab Ethnography*, p. 117.

some twigs from the alder and willow bushes that were growing near-by, and strewed them around the pyre. These twigs represented a dense forest that was supposed to surround the burning-place. We left the place while the pyre was still burning. Before leaving the grandfather went round the pyre, first from right to left and then from left to right, in order to so obscure his tracks that the deceased would not be able to follow him. Then stepping away from the pyre toward the houses, he drew a line with his stick on the snow, jumped across it and shook himself. The others followed his example. The line was supposed to represent a river which separated the village from the burning-place.”¹ The line on the snow was clearly regarded as representing a water barrier which divided the living from the dead.

In the Bari tribe of the Nilotic Sudan “the body of the rain-maker is submitted to special treatment as soon after death as possible, all the orifices of the body being plugged, lest his spirit should escape by one of these and bring sickness or, becoming a lion or leopard, constitute a danger to the people. The corpse is then ruddled with the usual ochre mixture. As a comment on this, Mr. Whitehead sends the following very interesting account, which further indicates the importance of the process as enabling the new rain-maker to control the spirits of his rain-making ancestors: ‘When the rain-maker is

¹ *The Jesup North Pacific Expedition (Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History, New*

York), vi. *The Koryak, Religion and Myths*, by W. Jochelson (Leyden and New York, 1905), p. 112.

dead, he is plugged, his ears are plugged, his nose is plugged, his eye is plugged, his mouth is plugged, he is plugged, his fingers are plugged. And then he is buried. It is done so that . . . the spirits may not go out, so that the son may manage the father so that he obeys (him), so that the spirits obey the son.' " ¹ In the Bachama and Mbula tribes of Northern Nigeria, a new king undergoes a period of seclusion for fifteen days ; he then takes possession of the palace by stepping over a cow killed at the threshold. Two explanations of this rite are given : (1) that in crossing over the body of the cow he left behind him all conduct of a kind which would be inconsistent with his new position ; and (2) that the sacrifice of the cow at the threshold secured the palace against invasion by the late chief's ghost.² Of these alternative explanations we cannot doubt that the second is the true one ; the first is too vague and sentimental to be primitive. Among the Wajagga of Mount Kilimanjaro, in East Africa, when the body of a man is carried out to burial, the son of the deceased places a bean in the left ear of the corpse in order that the ghost may take no further part in earthly life and may not come back to plague the house. By way of further precaution, a leaden ornament such as women wear in their ears is attached to the ear of the corpse, as a symbol of the peace which is henceforth to reign between the

¹ C. G. Seligman and Brenda Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (London, 1932), p. 292.

² C. K. Meek, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1931), i. p. 4.

living and the dead.¹ In the Tumbuka tribe of Nyasaland a corpse was carried out of the hut not by the door but by a special opening made in the wall. All the dishes, pots, clothes and articles of personal use belonging to the deceased were buried with him. But no metal goods were buried, whether hoes, or arrows, or brass ornaments, because it was feared that these would give the ghost opportunity to return with anger to hurt the friends. The nearest relatives then threw pounded cinders into the grave, that they might not chatter in their sleep or death come to them.² The Bana of the Cameroons of West Africa believe that the ghost even of a good man is malignant; hence they take many precautions to prevent it from issuing from the grave, and returning to cause sickness or death in the family. The body is tied up, the eyes are bandaged and it is carried out of the hut feet foremost, because otherwise the ghost might know its way back to the house. In the grave heavy logs are placed on the body to keep it down, and the men brandish their clubs threateningly at the ghost, disclaiming any responsibility for the death.³ In the Niger Delta, when a woman has died in giving birth to a child, it used to be customary to kill the infant and bury it with the dead mother; but if they decided to keep the child alive they performed a ceremony to prevent

¹ B. Gutmann (Madschame), "Trauer und Begräbnissitten der Wadschagga", *Globus*, lxxxix. (1906) p. 197; *id.*, *Dichten und Denken der Dschagganeer* (Leipzig, 1909),

p. 133.

² D. Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People* (London, 1914), p. 158.

³ G. van Hagen, "Die Bana", *Baessler-Archiv*, ii. (1912) p. 109.

the mother's ghost from returning to fetch away her child. A piece of a plantain stem (that portion which has the fruit clustered round it) was procured and forced into the womb of the dead mother. This according to native ideas prevents her spirit coming back to fetch the child, and the mother thinks she has the child with her. This account has been confirmed by an English lady who was present on two occasions when this ceremony was being performed.¹

In Southern Nigeria, where the belief in the rebirth of the dead is prevalent, dead children are usually buried lying on their side as in sleep. But if for any reason it is deemed undesirable that its soul should be born again the little body is buried face downward, to prevent the return of its soul. Grown men, on the other hand, are buried face upwards in order that they may see straight before them and find their way back again to earth.² In the Ho tribe of Togoland in West Africa, on the fourth day after the burial of a woman or the fifth day after the burial of a man, a relative goes to the grave and sprinkles water on it for the purpose of quietening the spirit of the dead and preventing it from returning to cause another death.³

Among the Eskimo of Alaska, near St. Michael, when a *shaman* died no one did any work for three

¹ Le Comte C. N. de Cardi, "Ju-Ju Laws and Customs in the Niger Delta", *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxix. (1899) p. 58.

² P. Amaury Talbot, *Life in Southern Nigeria* (London, 1923), pp. 144-145.

³ J. Spieth, *Die Ewe Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), p. 704.

days afterwards. The following night, when the people prepared to retire, each man in the village took his urine-tub and poured a little of its contents before the door, saying, "This water is our water; drink"—believing that should the ghost return during the night and try to enter, it would taste this water, and, finding it bad, would go away.¹ Among the Skuñgen Indians of Vancouver Island, as soon as a death has taken place the body is immediately taken out of the house by an opening in the wall from which the boards have been removed, because it is believed that the ghost would kill every one if the body were to stay in the house. The implements of the deceased are deposited close to the body, else his ghost would come and get them. Sometimes even his house is broken down.² The Déné-Dindjie Indians of North-West America surround the tombs of the dead with long poles to which ribands of different colours are fastened. The intention is to amuse the soul of the deceased and thus keep it beside the corpse.³

Among the Araucanians of Chili when a corpse is being carried out to a place of burial a woman walks behind it, strewing ashes on the path to prevent the spirit of the dead from returning to its late abode.⁴

¹ E. W. Nelson, "The Eskimo about Bering Strait", *18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (1896-97) (1899), p. 312.

² *Sixth Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada* (Report of the British Association for 1890, separate reprint), Second General Report on the Indians of British

Columbia, by Dr. Fr. Boas.

³ E. Petitot, *Monographie des Déné-Dindjies* (Paris, 1876), p. 47.

⁴ J. Ignatius Molina, *The Geographical, Natural and Civil History of Chili*, translated from the original Italian (London, 1809), ii. p. 91.

With regard to the Pehhuenches, an Indian tribe of Chili, speaking an Araucanian dialect, we are told that they greatly fear the spirits of the dead, and the nearer the relation of the survivor to the deceased the greater is his fear of the ghost. To prevent a ghost from returning they carry the corpse out of the tent feet foremost, for if they carried it out in any other posture they believe that the ghost will return. Further, when they are shifting camp, abandoning a site where they have tarried for some time and where several of their number have died and been buried, they take elaborate precautions to obscure their tracks by crossing them in various directions for the purpose of baffling the pursuit of the ghosts who might be following their comrades to their new home.¹ Among the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco a witch-doctor had been persuaded by the missionary to build a superior hut with a small opening for a door. But after an old man had died and been buried the witch-doctor's wife and family made very considerable alterations in the hut; in particular they blocked up the little door of the new hut, making it appear like a part of the wall, and opened a small gap on the opposite side instead. The reason for this alteration was explained to the missionary by the wizard himself. He said that this was done on purpose to puzzle the ghost. He, while in the body, knew the house well, but the alterations were so considerable that it was supposed his ghost

¹ E. Poeppig, *Reise in Chile, stromewährend der Jahre 1827-1832 Peru und auf dem Amazonen-* (Leipsig, 1835-1836), i. p. 393.

would not recognize it and would be particularly nonplussed when it made for the entrance to find it a solid wall.¹ The Indians of Brazil, in the neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro, used greatly to fear lest the spirit of the dead should return and do them harm. To prevent the return of a dead man's ghost they rolled up his body and tied it tightly; but lest he, or rather his ghost, should undo the fastenings and come back to haunt them they adopted the further precaution of confining the corpse in a great earthenware jar, battened down with an earthenware lid.²

In civilized Europe itself, if, in spite of all precautions, the ghost should make his way back from the grave, steps were taken to barricade the house against him. Thus, in some parts of Russia and East Prussia an axe or a lock is laid on the threshold, or a knife is hung over the door,³ and in Germany as soon as the coffin is carried out of the house all the doors and windows are shut, whereas so long as the body is still in the house, or at least immediately after the death, the windows (and sometimes the doors) are left open for the soul to escape.⁴ In the

¹ W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1911), pp. 165, 166.

² A. Thevet, *La Cosmographie Universelle* (Paris, 1575), ii. p. 959.

³ W. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People* (London, 1872), p. 318; A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube* (Berlin, 1869), §§ 736, 766; M. Töppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren* (Danzig, 1867), p. 108.

⁴ C. L. Rochholz, *Deutsche Glaube und Brauch* (Berlin, 1867), i. p. 171; A. Schleicher, *Volkstümliches aus*

Sonnenberg (Weimar, 1858), p. 152; W. Sonntag, *Tödienbestattung*, p. 169 (Halle, 1878); A. Wuttke, *op. cit.* §§ 725, 737; A. Gubernatis, *Storia comparata degli usi funebri in Italia e presso gli altri popoli Indo-Europei*, p. 47; G. Lammert, *Volksmedizin und medizinischer Aberglaube aus Bayern* (Würzburg, 1869), pp. 103, 105, 106; F. Schmidt, *Sitten und Gebräuche*, pp. 85, 92; L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), ii. p. 129;

Hebridean Islands of Mull and Tiree the barricade against the ghost assumes an easy and gentle form ; a sprig of pearlwort fastened over the lintel of a door from which a corpse has been carried is thought sufficient to deter the poor ghost from passing the threshold and re-entering his old home.¹

W. Tettau und J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen Ostpreussens, Litauens und Westpreussens* (Berlin, 1837), p. 285 ; A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 367 ; F. Nork, *Die Sitten und Gebräuche der Deutschen und ihrer Nachbarvölker* (1845), pp. 479, 482 ; J. A. E. Köhler, *Volksbrauch, Aberglauben, Sagen und andere alte Über-*

lieferungen in Voigtlande (Leipzig, 1867), pp. 251, 254 ; F. Panzer, *Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie* (Munich, 1848-1855), i. 263 ; A. Kuhn und W. Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche* (Leipzig, 1848), p. 435.

¹ J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1900), p. 241.

LECTURE VI

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IN the last lecture I gave some miscellaneous examples of the devices which primitive man adopts to prevent the spirits of the dead from returning to molest the living. To-day we turn to a device of another kind, which has had different and very important consequences. With many primitive peoples it has been customary to destroy all a dead man's property in order to prevent his ghost from returning to claim and enjoy it. Wherever this custom has been rigorously observed it has proved a fatal bar to economic progress, by preventing that accumulation and transmission of property which is essential to the advance of industry, and indeed to the very life of civilized society. Hence the tribes which have practised the custom have remained in a state of poverty and savagery from which they can never emerge so long as they adhere to this wasteful and ruinous practice.

Thus, for example, speaking of the natives of Melville and Bathurst Islands to the north of Australia, Baldwin Spencer observes: "The paper bark in which the body had been wrapped and all the dead woman's belongings were burnt in the fire,

and afterwards the ashes were completely and carefully covered over. In the case of a man his weapons are broken up and then burnt in the same way. In most tribes all the belongings of a dead person are the property of some special individual, such as a mother's brother, but here they are all destroyed."¹ From this statement we may infer that most Australian tribes preserve the belongings of the dead and pass them on to their next of kin; they are therefore in a more hopeful condition for economic progress than the natives of Melville and Bathurst Islands, who systematically destroy all the property of the dead.

Among the Wonkonguru of the Lake Eyre district of Central Australia, as soon as a man dies his body is brought out of the hut by the men. It is then tightly bound up with hair or fibre rope until it is a stiff package, when it is deposited in a grave about three feet deep. All the personal belongings of the dead person are broken at the grave of a man so that his spirit will not come back and use them. Women's belongings are not broken. The covering of his hut and the sticks to make it are also put on the grave, and then wood is piled on top. The wood is provided so that when the dead person "jumps up"—that is, rises from the grave—he will have a supply of firewood handy, and the sticks and hut covering are put there so that, in case it is cold when the dead man comes back, he can build a shelter.²

¹ Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), p. 243.

² G. Horne and G. Aiston, *Savage Life in Central Australia* (London, 1924), pp. 162-163.

Thus the attitude of these people towards the spirit of a dead man exhibits a mixture of fear and tender regard. They break his personal belongings because they fear that the ghost will come back and use them, but they provide the ghost with the means of obtaining warmth and shelter on cold nights at the grave.

Among the natives of San Cristoval, one of the Solomon Islands, after a man's death his property is destroyed ; his trees are cut down, his nuts and yams strewn about the ground, his bowl broken. The broken property is placed on the grave. A favourite dog or pig is also buried in a grave and their belongings are also broken ; in the case of a pig the bowl from which it fed will be broken, and in the case of a dog its owner's pig-hunting spear will be stuck up on the grave and never used again.¹ In some of the Solomon Islands a chief's fruit trees are cut down after his death.² Among the Sulka of New Britain, when a man died his plantations were laid waste, his fruit trees were cut down, the fruits themselves hacked in pieces, his pigs were killed and cut up and his weapons were broken. In the case of a wealthy or distinguished man his wives would also be killed after his death.³ The motive for all this destruction is not assigned by our authority, but we may conjecture that it was a fear lest the ghost of the dead man should return and attempt to enjoy his property and his wives.

¹ C. E. Fox, *The Threshold of the Pacific* (London, 1924), p. 211.

² W. G. Ivens, *Melanesians of the South-east Solomon Islands* (London,

1927), p. 215.

³ R. Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (Stuttgart, 1907), p. 185.

The natives of Niue, or Savage Island, in the Pacific disposed of the dead by setting their bodies adrift in canoes, or by laying the body on a pile of stones in the bush and covering it over with coconut leaves. After a time the bones were gathered and deposited in family caves or vaults. All the plantations, coconut trees, and other fruit trees of a person who died, were destroyed and thrown into the sea that they might go with him to the world of spirits.¹ Among the Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea, after a burial some of the most valuable ornaments of the deceased are usually, but not always, kept by the heir, while the rest are destroyed or given away to people outside his or her group, sometimes to other villages. The near relatives do not want to keep the things of everyday use which have belonged to the dead person, lest they should themselves die, no doubt at the hands of the ghost, coming back to reclaim his property from the new owner. Even the harpoon-shaft of a man is often broken to pieces, out of which the people manufacture harpoon-heads or daggers. The people say that a harpoon-shaft is sometimes broken in two, and the butt end kept, to which a new shaft of bamboo is attached, so that the weapon can be used again.² Apparently they think that the ghost will not recognize his harpoon when once it has been broken or cut in pieces. At the same time they show a dawning sense of the permanent value of property by occasionally allow-

¹ G. Turner, *Samoa* (London, *Papuans of British New Guinea* 1884), p. 306.

² G. Landtman, *The Kiwai*

(London, 1927), p. 263.

ing some of the most valuable ornaments of the deceased to be kept by his heir.

In the Nicobar Islands after a death, if the stores of food belonging to the deceased or other occupants of his hut were not removed prior to the death they are at once carried away to another hut for issue after the burial. Some of the coconut-shell water-vessels are taken with their contents to the entrance of the hut, where an uneven number (generally 3, 5 or 7 pairs) are violently dashed against a post so as to crack the shells. In like manner all of the bulk of the portable property of the deceased, such as (in the case of a man) his spears, pots, baskets, paddles, plates and a great variety of other articles, are broken or otherwise rendered unserviceable; and then the whole are conveyed to the cemetery in order to be deposited at the proper time on the grave or at the head-post, this being one of the essential sacrifices prescribed by time-honoured custom. The motive for depositing the broken property on the grave or at the head-posts is variously explained by the natives. Some say that it is done in order that all may see how sincere the mourners are in their intention of denying themselves the use or benefit of any of the property, notwithstanding its undoubted value in their eyes. "Another reason given for this wholesale destruction of property is that strangers who have no respect for the sacredness of tabued or sacrificed articles might appropriate uninjured and serviceable objects regardless of the displeasure of the disembodied spirit, who would unquestionably

resent any such token of indifference and disrespect by wreaking vengeance probably on those through whose remissness such misconduct had been rendered possible." ¹ However, we may surmise that here as elsewhere the true original motive for destroying a dead man's property was to prevent his ghost from returning to make use of it.

The Banar in Tonquin are said to burn all objects used by the deceased in order that he may not return and trouble the living by asking for his property.²

The Koryaks of North-Eastern Asia cremate their dead and burn with the body the weapons and household furniture of the deceased, such as spears, quivers and arrows, knives, hatchets and kettles; and they kill the deer which drew the corpse to the cremation ground and throw the fragments into the fire.³

The Savara of Southern India burn their dead, and with the body they burn everything that the dead man had: his bows and arrows, his dagger, his necklaces, his reaping-hook for cutting paddy, his axe, some paddy and rice, and so forth. Mr. Fawcett was told that all a man's money was burnt with him, but he thought that the statement was doubtful, though perhaps a little of the money might be so destroyed. When he asked the reason why a man's property is thus destroyed with his body he

¹ E. H. Man, *The Nicobar Islands and their People* (London, n.d.), pp. 131, 132, 138.

² E. Reclus, *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*, viii. p. 869.

³ S. Krashennnikov, *The History of Kamtschatka and the Kurilski Islands*, translated into English by James Grieve, M.D. (Gloucester, 1764), p. 233.

was told that, if they did not destroy it, the man's spirit would come back and demand it of them, and trouble them.¹

In Africa among the Yoruba-speaking peoples of the Slave Coast, on the day after a burial, all the articles which the deceased had in daily use, such as his pipe, his mat, his calabashes, and other things of small value, are carried out into the bush and burnt. Up to this point the soul of the deceased is supposed to be lingering near his old home, and the destruction of his property is to signify that there is no longer anything belonging to him. In former times the destruction of property was carried much further. Usually the room in which the deceased is buried is closed and never used again; sometimes the roof is removed. Rich families even abandon the house altogether. The deceased is then called thrice by name and adjured to depart and no longer to haunt the dwellings of the living. After this a fowl is sacrificed, which, besides securing a right-of-way for the soul, is supposed also to guide it. The feathers of the fowl are scattered round the house, and the bird itself carried out to a cross-roads, where it is cooked and eaten.² In a former lecture I gave other examples of a bird or an animal employed to conduct the souls of the dead to the spirit-land.³

¹ E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vi. (Madras, 1909) p. 325; Fred. Fawcett, "Notes on the Soaras (or Savaras), an Aboriginal Hill People of the Eastern Ghats of the Madras Presidency", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. (1886) p. 249.

² A. B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London, 1894), p. 159.

³ J. G. Frazer, *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion* (London, 1933), pp. 189 sqq.

In the African kingdom of Gingiro the old custom of destroying the property of the dead has been reported as follows by Jesuit travellers of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. After describing the death of a king and the installation of his successor, they proceed: "The new king calls all the dead one's favourites and orders them to be killed to bear the dead king company in the other world. Then they burn the house the old king lived in, with all his moveables, goods and furniture, not sparing anything, though never so valuable; and even when any private man dies, they burn not only his house, but the very trees and plants that are about it, and being asked why they do so, they answer, to the end, that the dead man, who was us'd to those places, do not return to them, invited by his former habitation, and delight in walking among those trees."¹ Among the Bogos of Central Africa, as reported by the French traveller, R. Caillié, when the head of a family dies it is common to burn everything that is in the house. At the foot of his bed the corpse is buried; a fire is kindled over his head every night, and the relations come and talk to him. The family of the deceased who are ruined by this act of superstition are supported till the next harvest by the village, for even their rice is not saved from the flames.²

With regard to the Kaffirs of South-East Africa, an old Portuguese writer says that after the death

¹ F. B. Tellez, S.J., *The Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia* (London, 1710), p. 199.

² R. Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo* (London, 1830), p. 164.

and burial of a man "they burn the thatched house in which he resided with all it contains, so that no one may possess anything that the deceased made use of during his lifetime, or may even touch it, and if it so happens that some one touches anything belonging to the deceased he does not enter his house until he has washed in the river. The ashes of the burnt house with any pieces of wood not quite consumed they put on the top of the grave."¹ Summing up the evidence of earlier writers on this subject, the historian of South Africa, Dr. McCall Theal, says that : "There was an idea that something connected with death attached to the personal effects of the deceased, on which account whatever had belonged to him that could not be placed in the grave, his clothing, mats, head-rest, etc., was destroyed by fire. The hut in which he had lived was also burned, and no other was allowed to be built on the spot. If he had been the chief, the whole kraal was removed to another site. Those who touched the corpse or any of the dead man's effects were obliged to go through certain ceremonies, and then to bathe in running water before associating again with their companions."² Speaking of the Kaffirs of Natal, that is the Zulus, a good authority says that "the deceased's personal articles are buried with him, the assegais being broken or bent, lest the ghost, during some

¹ Fr. J. dos Santos, *Eastern Ethiopia*, in G. McCall Theal, *Records of South-Eastern Africa*, vol. vii. (London, 1901) Book II. p. 307.

² G. McCall Theal, *Ethnography and Condition of South Africa before A.D. 1505* (London, 1919), i. 221-222.

midnight return to air, should do injury with them".¹

Among the aborigines of America also the custom of destroying a dead man's property, or at all events of refusing to make use of it, from a fear of his ghost has been widely diffused, especially in South America. Thus, among the Ahts of Vancouver Island after a death, the whole of a dead man's personal effects that had not been given away before his death were deposited with him—except his best canoes, his house-planks, and fishing and hunting instruments, which, with any slaves he may have had, were inherited by his eldest son. But if his friends were very superstitious they burnt the dead man's house with all its contents, or they removed the materials, and built the house in another place.² Thus, with regard to the Ahts it would appear that while the people as a whole had advanced to the stage of inheriting a dead man's most valuable property, the more superstitious members of the community adhered to the ancient custom of destroying it utterly by fire. Among the Knisteneaux Indians, if a dead man's property was not buried with him his ghost was supposed to return and sit on a tree near the house, armed with a gun, ready to shoot the frugal relatives who had thus deprived him of the use of his goods.³ The Digger Indians of California burn all the property of the deceased, so

¹ J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu* (London, 1857), p. 240.

1868), pp. 159, 160.

² G. M. Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London, 1868), p. cvi.

³ A. Mackenzie, *Voyages through the Continent of North America*, p. cvi.

that the spirit of the dead man may have all that he needs in the other world, and not return to look for it among his surviving friends.¹ Similarly, the Kutchan Indians of the Colorado regarded the property of a dead man as fraught with danger, and accordingly they burned it with fire together with the hut in which he had died.² With regard to the Maidu of California who systematically burned the property of the dead, Professor Roland B. Dixon observes that "owing to the general custom of burning most, if not all, of the property of a man at his death, there was little that could be inherited. Such things as were not destroyed seem to have generally been regarded as the property of the eldest son, although other children and relatives often shared with him."³

Thus, while the Maidu destroyed the great bulk of the dead man's property, they seem to have had a faint beginning of a custom of allowing some of it to pass by inheritance to his surviving kinsfolk, especially to his eldest son. In that tribe the custom of burning the property of the dead was a solemn annual ceremony carried out by the whole body of the people collectively on a special burning ground set apart for the purpose. The property to be destroyed was first attached to tall poles or collected at their foot; after being thus exposed to public view for a time it was thrown on the fire, until the flames were almost choked by the weight of the

¹ M. Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 449.

² *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, ix. p. 348.

³ R. B. Dixon, "The Northern Maidu", *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, xvii. (1902) p. 226.

superincumbent property. At the burning held at Mooretown in 1900 there were about a hundred and fifty poles filled with objects, so the amount of property sacrificed was not small. "The purpose of the whole ceremony is to supply the ghosts of the dead with clothing, property and food in the other world. Each family gives to its dead what it can afford; and the whole ceremony is distinctly individual, in that there is no general offering for the dead as a body, but each family offers directly to its own relatives only . . . there is considerable property placed with the body in the grave, and sometimes some is burnt at the time of burial. The main reliance is, however, placed on the supplies offered at the annual burning. After sacrificing thus for three or four years it seems to be felt that enough has been done; and, as a rule, the family does not continue to offer property for a relative at the burnings for more than four or five years."¹

The practice of the Mosquito Indians as regards the property of the dead appears to be inconsistent. "When a death takes place, they generally bury a bow and arrows, a gourd calabash, and knife, and sundry other articles with the body, and carefully keep in repair a small hut built over the grave, in which they deposit from time to time such little offerings as a yard or two of cloth, a bunch of plantains, a bottle of rum, etc. They have also the custom of destroying everything belonging to a dead

¹ R. B. Dixon, *op. cit.* pp. 241 *sqq.*, 254. (The quotation is from pp. 253, 254.)

person, burning his clothes, splitting his canoes, and, worst of all, cutting down his fruit trees.”¹

Similarly, at a man's death the Indians of Nicaragua destroy all the property that he had earned or otherwise acquired in his lifetime ; they destroy also his trees and all his banana plantations. The writer who records the custom adds that in consequence these Indians never prosper.²

The Catio Indians of Colombia in South America carry a corpse out of the hut not by the usual door but by another opening, in order that the ghost may not be able to find his way back to his old dwelling. And they bury the dead man's property with him in the grave, because they fear that otherwise his ghost would come back to reclaim it, but apparently they do not break or destroy the articles which they deposit with the dead.³

Speaking of the Indian tribes in the valley of the Orinoco the great German traveller Humboldt says : “ Some tribes, for instance the Tamanacs, are accustomed to lay waste the fields of a deceased relative, and cut down the trees which he has planted. They say ‘ that the sight of objects which belonged to their relation makes them melancholy ’. They like better to efface than to preserve remembrances. These effects of Indian sensibility are very detri-

¹ C. N. Bell, “ The Mosquito Territory, its Climate, People, Productions, etc. ”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xxxii. (1862) p. 254.

² Dr. Bruno Mierisch, “ Eine Reise nach den Goldgebieten im

Osten von Nicaragua ”, *Petermann's Mitteilungen*, xxxix. (1893) p. 31.

³ Joseph und Maria Schilling, “ Religion und soziale Verhältnisse der Catiös-Indianer in Kolumbien ”, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, xxiii. (1925) p. 296.

mental to agriculture, and the monks oppose with energy these superstitious practices, to which the natives converted to Christianity still adhere in the missions.”¹ While we can accept Humboldt’s statement as to the destruction of the property of the dead among these Indians, we may doubt the truth of the motive which he puts in the mouth of the people. They seem to have been converted to Christianity, and were probably unwilling to reveal to a traveller that fear of the spirits of the dead which we can hardly doubt was the true original motive of the practice.

Among the Kobeua Indians of North-West Brazil on the borders of Colombia the dead are buried in the communal house. On the closed grave are burned the bow and arrows, the fish-traps and other implements of a man or the baskets and sieve of a woman, and her pots are smashed and the fragments thrown away in the forest, in order that nothing of the goods of the dead may remain behind, and that the soul be not compelled to return to claim the property and to punish the survivors for their negligence or avarice.²

The Macusi Indians of British Guiana burn the property of the dead.³

After a death the Conibos Indians of the Ucayale River in North-Eastern Peru break everything in the

¹ F. H. A. von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America*, English translation (London, 1852), ii. p. 487.

² T. Koch-Grünberg, *Zwei Jahre*

unter den Indianern (Berlin, 1909–1910), ii. p. 150.

³ R. Schomburgk, *Reisen in Britisch-Guiana* (Leipsic, 1847–1848), p. 422.

house and then set it on fire ; afterwards they cover the whole site of the burnt hut with a thick layer of ashes to receive the tracks of the ghost if he should come to revisit his old dwelling.¹ The Yaguas on the upper waters of the Amazon destroy everything that a dead man possessed or even touched ; they kill his domestic animals and they lay waste his gardens.²

In the Bororo tribe of Central Brazil it is the rule that all the things which a dead man had made use of should be either burnt or thrown into a river or deposited in the basket which contains his bones, in order to give his ghost no inducements to return and fetch or enjoy his property. Professor von den Steinen witnessed the destruction of the property which had belonged to a dead woman ; indeed the property of all the members of her family who had lived in the same hut with her was destroyed. A man decked with green leaves represented the dead woman, who lay buried under a covering of green leaves. This leaf-decked representative of the dead took part in a dance. A man with two rattles led the dance, behind him followed the leaf-decked man, and next came four others. After dancing and singing in chorus they ran away into the wood. The representative of the dead woman then blew a flute to summon two persons who had long been dead and buried. It was deemed necessary that their ghosts should be present at the ceremony of

¹ F. de Castelnau, *Expédition dans les parties centrales de l'Amérique du Sud*, iv. (1851) p. 384.

² F. de Castelnau, *op. cit.* v. (Paris, 1851) p. 19.

making over the property to the dead woman, in order that they should welcome their new comrade in the spirit-land and convince her that nothing that belonged to her had been withheld, so that she should have no excuse for coming back as a ghost to reclaim the missing articles. These two dead persons were represented by two men covered with mud, who came out of the wood carried on the bodies of two others. They jumped about, while bull-roarers were swung. A fire was kindled and the property of the deceased and her family was collected and burned, while the men danced round the fire. The leaf-decked man was held down by the two mud-covered men. Afterwards he was released and danced about with another man in a feather head-dress, throwing the things about and stepping into the flames.¹

Yuracares are a tribe of Indians inhabiting the Cordilleras of Santa Cruz de la Sierra to the north east of Cochobamba. They bury with the dead his clothes, his bow and arrows, and presents for dead relatives in the other world, and they inter with him all the movable property which he had used and not given away in his lifetime. They break his wife's kitchen utensils on the grave. The writer who reports the custom adds that "they burn everything that he has not given away, for fear of his soul returning to the house to look for it and to terrify the survivors or touch them with the stick which a

¹ K. von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 502, 506 *sqq.*

ghost is supposed to carry and the touch of which brings death".¹

The Araucanians of the Pampas and the Puelches and the Patagonians burn all a dead man's possessions on his grave and slaughter his domestic animals, his horses and dogs, that they may accompany him to the other world.² Among the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco "the personal belongings and animals of the deceased are destroyed at his death, evidently with the idea that they may prove useful to him in the after-life. The reason given by the Indian for doing this is that the ghost would otherwise haunt the relatives."³ For the same reason they not only abandon but destroy by fire the village in which a death has taken place, believing that the site is haunted by the hovering spirit of the deceased for about a month, after which they suppose that the spirit will depart and no longer trouble them.⁴ In like manner at the southern extremity of the continent the Onas of Tierra del Fuego destroy all a dead man's property at his death except his dogs, and they shun the place of his death and burial, making a long detour to avoid it, whenever their nomadic life has brought them once more into the neighbourhood.⁵

The disastrous economic and moral effects of this systematic destruction of the property of the dead

¹ A. d'Orbigny, *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale* (Paris, 1835), iii. I^{re} Partie, 209.

² A. d'Orbigny, *L'Homme américain* (Paris, 1839), i. pp. 196, 238.

³ W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown*

People in an Unknown Land (London, 1911), p. 122.

⁴ W. B. Grubb, *op. cit.* pp. 122, 160 sqq.

⁵ C. R. Gallardo, *Los Onas* (Buenos Aires, 1910), pp. 321 sqq.

which has prevailed so widely among the Indians of South America have been well pointed out by the French traveller, Alcide d'Orbigny, who witnessed and has described the practice of the custom in several tribes of that continent.

Speaking of the Patagonians who practise the custom, this discerning traveller observes : " They have no laws, no punishments inflicted on the guilty. Each lives as he pleases, and the greatest thief is the most highly esteemed, because he is the most dexterous. A motive which will always prevent them from abandoning the practice of theft, and at the same time will always present an obstacle to their ever forming fixed settlements, is the religious prejudice which, on the death of one of their number, obliges them to destroy his property. A Patagonian who has amassed during the whole of his life an estate by thieving from the whites or exchanging the products of the chase with neighbouring tribes, has done nothing for his heirs ; all his savings are destroyed with him, and his children are obliged to rebuild their fortunes afresh—a custom which, I may observe in passing, is found also among the Tamanaques of the Orinoco who ravage the field of the deceased and cut down the trees which he has planted ;¹ and among the Yuracares, who abandon and shut up the house of the dead, regarding it as a profanation to gather a single fruit from the trees of his field. It is easy to see that with such customs they can nourish no real ambition since their needs

¹ F. H. A. von Humboldt, *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales*, viii. 273.

are limited to themselves ; it is one of the causes of their natural indolence, and it is a motive which, so long as it exists, will always impede the progress of their civilization. Why should they trouble themselves about the future when they have nothing to hope from it ? The present is all in all in their eyes, and their only interest is individual ; the son will take no care of his father's herd, since it will never come into his possession ; he busies himself only with his own affairs and soon turns his thoughts to looking after himself and getting a livelihood. This custom has certainly something to commend it from the moral point of view in so far as it destroys all the motives for that covetousness in heirs which is too often to be seen in our cities. The desire or the hope of a speedy death of their parents cannot exist, since the parents leave absolutely nothing to their children ; but on the other hand if the Patagonians had preserved hereditary properties, they would without doubt have been to-day in possession of numerous herds, and would necessarily have been more formidable to the whites, since their power in that case would have been more than doubled, whereas their present habits will infallibly leave them in a stationary state, from which nothing but a radical change will be able to deliver them.”¹

Here, for the present, I must bring these lectures to a close, but I am far from having exhausted the subject ; there remain large and important aspects

¹ Alcide d'Orbigny, *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale*, ii. (Paris and Strasburg, 1839-1843) pp. 99 sq. ; compare *id.*, *L'Homme américain* (Paris, 1839), ii. p. 74.

of it on which I have hitherto said little or nothing. In future I shall hope to supply some at least of these omissions. Meantime, perhaps, even in these short lectures I have said enough to give you an idea, however imperfect, of the extent and depth of that fear of the spirits of the dead which, for good or evil, has played a great part in the development of religion.

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